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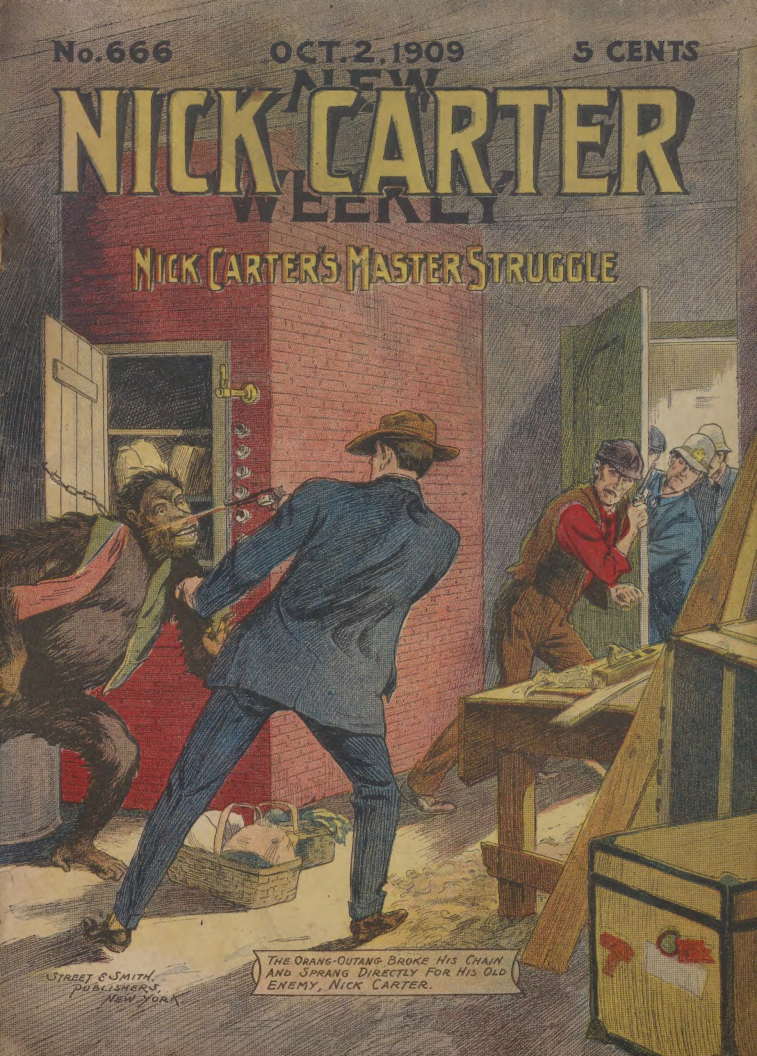
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

NICK CARTER'S MASTER STRUGGLE



THE ORANG-OUTANG BROKE HIS CHAIN AND SPRANG DIRECTLY FOR HIS OLD ENEMY, NICK CARTER.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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NICK CARTER'S MASTER STRUGGLE;

OR,

THE BATTLE WITH THE MAN-MONKEY.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF THE TOMBS.

"Say! that long-armed gentleman yegg has made a clean getaway! What do you think of that?" exclaimed Patsy Garvan, bursting into Nick Carter's office early one evening, and waving one of the afternoon papers in his hand.

"Don't you let Adelina hear you use such inelegant language, young man," chuckled Chick, who happened to be with the chief. "She'll reprimand you good and plenty."

"There's little to choose between the phrases of either of you," said Nick, in comment. Then he turned to the matter sprung by Patsy, and asked: "Who do you mean, Patsy?"

"That Bob Spale we nabbed last week for the murder of his nephew, out in Westchester—Bob Spale, the strangler. Listen to this." And Patsy threw himself into a chair and read as follows from the still damp news sheet:

"'The occasions when prisoners have broken jail from the Tombs—and from the new Tombs, at that—may be counted on the fingers of one hand. But this morning such a surprising thing did occur, although the officers are trying to hush the matter up, and the warden denies it flatly. The *Courier* is informed, however, by testimony beyond dispute, that a man being held for trial—and that for murder in the first degree—escaped early this morning from the Tombs.

"'The prisoner was the man Spale, accused of strangling his nephew, Mr. Herman Spale, of thirteen and one-half Bank Street, in an automobile in Westchester, and then wrecking the automobile to make it appear that his victim was killed by the smash-up.

"'The Westchester police could not, at the time, properly house such a prisoner, and he was brought to the city and shut up in the Tombs. The murder was a particularly atrocious one, and the murderer seemed absolutely careless of what became of him, he having accomplished, it seemed, a revenge that he had planned for five years.

"'About five years ago Robert Spale, after an absence of twenty-five years from New York, returned from foreign shores and tried to make his nephew, who was sole heir of the Spale estate, recognize him and acknowledge him. That Herman Spale refused to do. It is said that Herman Spale profited vastly by Robert's disappearance, as he fell heir to the property of Robert's father, Daniel Spale, who was a well-known saloon keeper, for many years, on Greenwich Street, in the old Ninth Ward.

"'However, Bob Spale could not prove his case, or the property had been willed in such a way that he could not break his father's testament. The fact remained that Herman had the whip hand, and Bob sank out of sight, after figuring in the papers for a brief time. He seems to be a strange man, and must

have lived a strange life. He refused, when requested by the reporters, to explain where he had been, and what he had done, for the twenty-five years that New York had not known him.

"'A certain private detective, it is said, was the first to discover that Mr. Herman Spale had been strangled, instead of merely killed in the automobile wreck, and it was by this detective's instrumentality that Bob Spale was arrested shortly after the commission of the crime.

"'It was not supposed by the authorities that Bob Spale had any friends. Yesterday, however, a young woman came to the Tombs to see him. She was a cripple, and went on crutches. But, harmless as she appeared she must have brought him the tools, and even a rope of some kind, by which he made his escape early in the morning.

"'All that is known of his method was that he freed himself from his cell by appearing to be sick and calling the guard, whom he came near strangling, as he had his nephew, with a cord, when the man helped him out of the cell to take him to the hospital ward. Then, leaving the guard unconscious, he mounted to the upper tier of cells, and thence reached the roof through an open hatch which ventilates the lofts.

"'It would seem that no human being—and scarcely an ape—could find means of clambering to the ground from that roof; but Spale did so. At least, so it is supposed. He is no longer in the Tombs prison, so he must be at large; and the above is the only accredited method of escape. The police, however, are confident they will have him again within a few hours.'

"Now, what do you think of that?" cried the breathless Patsy. "Isn't that enough to make you fellows sit up and take notice? And, by Jove! that reporter has garbled the facts in the case a good deal, hasn't he?"

"Oh, he isn't as far out of the way as he might be," said Nick Carter easily. "We happened to be out there in Westchester and saw the automobile wrecked. Indeed, if I had not seen Herman Spale's dead body propped up in the car before the smash, I might not have suspected that it was dead before the wreck. We had chance on our side, you know, boys."

"That's right," said Patsy. "And it was sheer chance that threw me in with Whittling Johnny, who had been a chum of Bob Spale in his boyhood, and to whom Bob revealed himself when he returned to New York five years back. I followed Johnny when he went to warn Bob that the cops were after him, and so we nabbed the long-armed sinner. And, by Jove! I'll never forget the squeezing he gave me when I pitched into him. He's a regular man-monkey, indeed!"

"I wonder what Alfred Meyer, the Spales' lawyer, will say about the case now?" said Chick. "You know he was against searching for Herman's murderer at all."

"I wonder if he suspected all the time that Bob was alive?" said Patsy.

"I don't really think he did," Nick observed. "Mr. Meyer struck me as being merely desirous of saving the family name from any scandal. Herman Spale was dead, and the property of both branches of the family was to go to two educational institutions. The family will die out with this Bob's execution——"

"You're cooking your rabbit before you catch it, Nick!" exclaimed Chick, laughing. "The man seems to have disappeared."

"But he will be executed, just the same—if not for this crime, then for some other," replied Nick grimly. "The family ends with him. Meyer declared that the will of old Daniel Spale, leaving his money to Herman, and Herman's will, devoting the property he received from the saloon keeper, and from his own father, to the institution in the West and a college named, was so carefully drawn that even if Bob Spale 'came to life,' as he called it, he could not break the will."

"The fellow is a wonder to escape from the Tombs—he really is," said Chick ruminatively.

"He is a very powerful man, and his arms are highly trained," said Nick.

"Gee! I should say they were," grumbled Patsy. "He certainly put the squeeze on *me*."

"I do not believe he has been a common sailor all his life," Nick said. "His manner and speech do not suggest it. There is something strangely animal-like about him. He even, as it seemed to me that night we caught him, had clinging about him a strangely animal-like odor. You know the pungent smell that assails your nostrils when you enter one of the animal houses in the Bronx Park?"

"I noticed that myself," said Patsy.

"What do you deduce from it, Nick?" asked his chief assistant, smiling.

"I don't know that I deduce *anything*. But, as I have always told you boys, it is the bizarre and peculiar that usually points our way to the solving of any mystery. Had that Bob Spale and his nephew been walking along a road out there in Westchester, and Bob sprung upon his enemy and throttled him, the best detectives the country affords might be working over the mystery now—might even work for months upon it—before bringing the criminal to book. But the fact that we knew Bob Spale was in that car when it started down the hill, at the bottom of which the wreck occurred, and that it seemed that nothing but instant death must meet the reckless being who would hurl himself from that car en route, led us to conclusions which pointed to a man with enormously long and strong arms, an acrobat with the wonderful abilities of an ape. Such a man we looked for, and such a man we found in Bob Spale, supposedly buried in Greenwood Cemetery for a score and a half of years."

"By the way," said Chick, "who do you suppose the woman is that the paper speaks of?"

"Even the worst men usually find some woman to take their part," said Nick philosophically.

"Hold on!" cried Patsy suddenly. "I've got *that!*"

"Got what?" asked Chick curiously. "The St. Vitus' dance? You don't seem to be able to keep still a moment."

"You think you can identify the woman, Patsy?" asked the chief. "We don't know much about Bob Spale's associates, do we?"

"Don't even know where he lived out there beyond Corona where we captured him," grumbled Chick.

"But I know where Whittling Johnny lives," declared Patsy. "And Whittling Johnny has a crippled sister called Belle. That's who passed Bob Spale the stuff to help him in his getaway, I bet a farm!"

"Sure of that, are you?" queried Nick.

"Positive. It seems to be the one decent thing Whittling Johnny does—taking care of that sister. And something I heard makes me believe that Bob Spale had been good to this lame girl, and that's why Johnny was so eager to help him when he was in trouble."

"Well, we're really not called upon to do anything, you know," said Nick slowly. "We did our duty when we passed Bob Spale over to the police. If they have lost him, it isn't our business to find him for them. We'll give them all the information we can, of course——"

At the moment Joseph, Nick Carter's old and faithful servant, opened the door softly and came in with a card on his tray.

"Who is it, and what does he want, Joseph?" asked Nick, reaching out a hand for the card.

"I never saw him before, sir. He is a Jew man, Mr. Carter, and he is not a pleasant man. I think," said Joseph, who usually chose his words with great care, "that he is a shyster lawyer. I do not like him."

"Well, neither do I like his kind," grumbled Nick. Then he read from the card: "'Emanuel Finowitz.' Seems to me I've heard the name before. Do either of you boys know him?"

"You must think our choice of acquaintances is peculiar, Nick," laughed his first assistant.

"Say! I know who he is," cried Patsy. "Joseph's hit it right. He's a shyster lawyer around the criminal courts. He's taken part in some pretty shady actions. He's smart, too, I reckon."

"I don't want to have anything to do with any case he might bring me," said Nick, and was about to tell Joseph to send the man away, when Patsy added:

"I believe he was accepted by Bob Spale as his lawyer at the first examination."

"Hold on, then! This may have something to do with Spale's case. I'll see the man, at least, and hear what his business is. Send him up after five minutes, Joseph."

CHAPTER II.

BOB SPALE'S CLAIM.

When the criminal lawyer, Emanuel Finowitz, was shown into Nick Carter's office, or workroom, on the second floor of his residence, Chick and Patsy had disappeared; but they had only retired behind the false partition at the end of the room, from which vantage point they could see and hear all that occurred in the main room if they so wished.

Mr. Finowitz was an unctuous little man, with a highly polished bald head, short, carefully brushed "sideboards," very fat red cheeks, and a nose that stood out so prominently on his face that, at first sight, it was the only feature one saw.

But he had, besides, a narrow-lipped mouth—a strange mouth for a Hebrew—ungainly ears, and two small, sleepy black eyes. His hair and whiskers were reddish-gray. He was a Polish Jew of a most objectionable class.

That nationality is really a wonderful people, and is advancing faster in this country than any other emigrant race—and deserves so to advance for its many virtues. But there are among the "Yiddishers" an immoral class, men who have forgotten their own ancient religion and have accepted no other in its place, and in casting off the shackles of their ritual have thrown aside all belief in the plain Commandments as well.

These men are utterly untrustworthy in business life; they will cheat friend or foe alike; and when they get into the legal game—as some of them have—they may be expected to become a disgrace to the profession into which they have jimmied their way!

Emanuel Finowitz had one god, and the name of it was "Mezumeh." He would attempt anything for that god.

"Do I know you, Mr. Finowitz?" asked Nick Carter brusquely.

"You do nod, Misder Garter," replied the lawyer, who had the racial misfortune of always speaking as though he had a bad cold in his head. "Id has been my loss."

"You flatter me," declared Nick, scarcely hiding his disgust. "Let us come to the point. What do you want, Mr. Finowitz?"

"I will be prief, Misder Garter; I will be prief!" declared the legal light. "Bud am I assured thad whatever I say to you will go no farther?"

"You are not assured of any such thing!" declared the detective, with some warmth. "If I accepted any case which you might bring me, that would be another thing. But I bind myself to no secrecy without knowing what the matter is."

An expressive shrug of Mr. Emanuel Finowitz's plump shoulders showed that he appreciated the point and was willing to abide by Nick Carter's decision. He began again:

"I have a question to put you, in behalf of a cliend,

Misder Garter. I usually demand a vee myzelf when I dake a gase. Would id be objectionable if I offered you a retainer before I pud de question?"

"I'll hear the question first," said Nick shortly.

"A word of explanation first, sir," said Finowitz. "You understand, Misder Garter, that my pracdice is mosdly among the criminal classes. Id iss necessary thad there should be criminal lawyers; somepody musd defend them in court; and, though they may be de offscourings of humanity, they should have as fair a chance as their betters before the law—eh?"

Nick refrained from expressing any sentiment.

"Even Dickens' famous character, *Jaggers,* was nod wholly without bowels of gompassion, Misder Garter. And I peg of you to believe me as compassionate as *Jaggers*—if nod his equal in legal ability."

Nick still remained silent.

"I come now to de zirgumstances that finally sends me to you, Misder Garter," said Finowitz, bearing up under Nick's silence with apparent sang froid. "One of my cliends is in an unfortunate position. He has been accused of a capital grime—yes, sir! a capital grime. The circumstances are, so far as I see, much against him. And to make id worse," declared Mr. Finowitz, "he has practically no money.

"It costs money to fight a case such as his. You know that, Misder Garter. I do nod say I can clear him of the charge against him. I have nod encouraged him to believe dot I can. But with plenty of money to spend for talent we may be able to mitigate the sentence which will finally be passed upon him. Ad leasd, Misder Garter, it seems to me that he should have his chance!"

Mr. Finowitz spoke with great warmth; Nick took the statement with more than the proverbial "grain of salt." "You mean that you want as big a plum out of the pudding as you can get," the detective muttered to himself.

"Now this cliend," said Finowitz confidentially, "iss of a family dot was rolling in vealth—yes, Misder Garter! rolling in vealth!"

"A very nice thing to roll in, I have no doubt," observed Nick Carter. "And I really wish, Mr. Finowitz, you would not miscall me. My name is Carter; not an article of dress. It annoys me to be called out of name."

"Garter! Of course I know you name, Misder Garter!" cried the astonished Finowitz.

Nick shrugged his shoulders hopelessly and let him proceed.

"Well, Misder Garter," said the lawyer blandly, "as I remarked, the family to which my cliend belongs is a very wealthy family. I admid he was the plack sheeb of the flock. He was disowned by his father and he ran away from home, and his friends knew him no more for years, sir.

"His father died, and carefully willed his fortune to another branch of de family, Misder Garter. They all pretended he was dead, anyvay. You see, they was ashamed of this plack sheeb and they tried to forged him.

"The same relative that had got my cliend's father's fortune was left a great estate by his father, too. This old man had always been tender toward de plack sheeb—do you see? He had said dot de plack sheeb had had no chance, Misder Garter. Sometimes he had hunted my cliend up, when he was a boy knocking about the streets of the city, and living from hand to mouth—this was after he had first run away from his own father—and this elderly relative had helped my cliend with money, and had promised him that, no matter how his own father treated him, when he died the plack sheeb should not be forgodden.

"Now, Misder Garter, my cliend believes that there was something more than an empty promise in that stadement. He believes dot his elderly relative meand vot he said. Those of my cliend's relatives dot wished him dead so long ago, and did their all to make it appear so, could never convince the old man that it was a fact. Indeed, we have reason to pelieve, Misder Garter, that the old man was never told that the plack sheeb was supposed to have been drowned and was buried oudside de family lot."

Nick Carter started, and stared hard at Finowitz for a moment. But the lawyer did not turn a hair, but blinked his little eyes and went on with his story.

"This relative of my cliend, who has fallen heir to the family fortune, was not the sort of a man dot would give anyding up—no, no! When once his hands was on dot money, Misder Garter, he hold to id—yes!

"And the will of my cliend's father dot left the fortune to this mean man is a will dot I should nod like to try to break myself—and so I have invormed my cliend. But he believes that the old man who showed him such kindness when he was a boy made provision for him in his will——"

"Have you not looked up a copy of that will, Mr. Finowitz?" demanded Nick, showing some interest in the story in spite of himself.

"I have zeen the record of the will in question, Misder Garter. In it is mentioned a 'zegret trust.' What that may mean, my cliend and I leave you to guess, sir!" exclaimed the lawyer, pouching out his chest and twinkling his eyes very rapidly.

"What's that?" demanded Nick angrily. "Why do you leave to me? I care little about the business. I have nothing to do with it."

"Oh, yes, sir!" cried Finowitz, rubbing his hands deprecatingly. "I understand dot. But it was a figure of speech, Misder Garter."

"Why do you tell me this story, sir?" demanded Nick.

"Let me finish my explanation, sir, and then I will pud my question," said Finowitz hastily. "I must read you a paragraph from the will of the kindly relative in question. Remember, it is copied verbatim

from the will recorded some fifteen or more years ago. Here id iss:

"'I confide to my dear son the zecret trust of which we have often spoken, sealed instructions for which are deposited with my will with my lawyer, Mr. Alfred Meyer. My son has passed his word of honor to me that he will fulfill the provisions of that trust to the uttermost; by so doing will he only receive my blessing, for this trust is as binding as any provision of this, my last will and testament.'

"You will now understand what my cliend is after, Misder Garter. He believes dot that zegret trust deals with himself. He believes, as he was not mentioned in his relative's will, that the old man left his son to do justice by him. And did the son do it——"

"No," said Nick quietly. "Therefore, the client you mention took vengeance into his own hands, and he strangled his nephew, Herman Spale!"

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER LEGAL LIGHT.

Mr. Emanuel Finowitz showed no confusion that Nick Carter should have guessed his client's name. He merely nodded and pursued his story:

"The statement of my cliend, Misder Garter, seemed reasonable to me, and the more so after I had gone indo the bast hisdory of the family. We know we cannot break Daniel Spale's will, and we believe that the will of this Herman Spale, who so unfortunately died out there in Westchester as the result of an automobile accident——"

"Bah, Mr. Finowitz!" exclaimed Nick. "Reserve that for the jury."

The lawyer winked, and said softly:

"No matter how he died. He iss dead. And his will, I understand, was drawn by the same man who drew his great-uncle's will. There is no breaking a will of Alfred Meyer's—I know that!

"And I realize that my cliend is in a peculiar position. A man under suspicion of murder has few rights. But we have the right to learn what that zegret trust attached to Herman's father's will was. Do you see?"

"And what is it to me?" demanded Nick Carter. "I ask you again to come to the point."

"I am hastening, Misder Garter," said Finowitz. "I have been to Mr. Alfred Meyer on behalf of my cliend, and I have asked for information regarding that zegret trust mentioned in the will of Herman's father. He has refused to give me the information I requested. In fact, he claims to know nothing aboud id, save that a sealed envelope was deposited with the will in his hands by the old man, to be given up on demand by the son."

"That is all he could tell you?" asked Nick reflectively.

"It is all he would tell me," said Emanuel Finowitz. "He said, as it was addressed to Mr. Herman Spale, he held it for Mr. Herman Spale, and nobody else; he denied having any knowledge of the contents of the envelope, nor did he at that time, or later, learn anything regarding the so-called zegret trust. Those were his words to me, Misder Garter."

"Well, Mr. Finowitz, I hope you will come to the point at last, having already taken up a lot of my time," said Nick, with a groan.

"Now we are ready for it!" cried Finowitz, in a sprightly manner, and he smiled ingratiatingly upon the detective. "We know that after the—the death of Mr. Herman Spale, you had access to his papers—at least, to some extent. My cliend does not believe, Misder Garter, thad his nephew has ever destroyed the instructions his father left him so secretly. You will remember how impressively the paragraph relating to it in the will reads? My cliend says that Herman was always superstitious and what he calls 'hare-hearted.' He loved money too much to obey the request of his dead father and make provision for my injured cliend——"

"I really wish you would reserve all that for your jury, Mr. Finowitz," interrupted Nick again.

"I peg bardon!" ejaculated Finowitz. "However, that is my cliend's belief. He is convinced the zegret trust paper is still among Herman Spale's possessions. Our question is this: 'Did you come across any such paper in your investigations, or anything else that pointed to the conclusion my cliend has made—that he was to be a beneficiary under his elderly cousin's will?'"

Nick stared at him for several moments, too much amazed to answer. Then, as his brows drew together, he demanded:

"Do I understand that you are serious in putting this question to me, Finowitz? Do you suppose for a moment that had I read any of Herman Spale's private papers that I would reveal their contents to you?"

"And would it be a crime?" demanded the lawyer warmly. "Have a thought, Misder Garter, for my poor cliend's helplessness——"

"I've got several thoughts—about both him and you!" exclaimed Nick angrily. "I fancy that you are smelling about to see if there is not some money belonging to Bob Spale that you can grab for your fee. And you'll learn nothing through me, you shyster!—even if I knew anything I would not tell you. As for your client himself, he seems to be able to take care of himself. Do you not know that he has escaped from jail already? If he gets away, Mr. Finowitz, I reckon you will whistle for your fee, anyway!"

While he had been speaking thus heatedly, Nick had touched the bell for Joseph, and now the serving man appeared.

"Show this fellow out, Joseph!" commanded the detective. "Not another word, Mr. Finowitz! I won't listen to you."

The lawyer slunk out of the door, but Joseph remained a moment behind him and spoke to Nick.

"Shall I show the other gentleman out, too, sir?" he asked softly.

"What other gentleman? Did he have somebody with him?" cried Nick.

"No, sir. But while you were engaged with him another gentleman called. He says he would like to see you for a moment, but he gave me no card."

"Oh, send him up!" exclaimed Nick, in disgust. "I reckon I can stand anybody after that chap."

In two minutes Joseph opened the door of the room again and ushered in a little man, who, in many ways, was the exact opposite of the fellow who had been Nick Carter's first visitor.

At least, where Mr. Emanuel Finowitz had been blatant and boorish, this visitor showed every refinement. He was a little man, brisk but courteous, and with distinct marks of self-preservation about him. His hair and mustache were carefully dyed. He wore a toupee. His cheeks were reddened from the rouge pot. His teeth glistened as no natural teeth ever did, and he was padded over his chest and across his shoulders to give him a truly youthful figure.

"Mr. Alfred Meyer!" ejaculated Nick, in no little surprise. "To what am I indebted for this honor?"

"Good evening, Mithter Carter! I mutht crave your indulgence for this late call—I mutht indeed," exclaimed Mr. Alfred Meyer, who cultivated a lisp for social occasions, but dropped it usually when he got down to business. A good many people considered Mr. Meyer merely a butterly of fashion—and an aged one at that; but he was really one of the keenest attorneys in New York.

"Make no excuses, sir," said Nick, smiling. "It is not so late for a social call."

"Let me not beg the question, Mithter Carter!" cried little Meyer. "This is not a thocial call."

"Then I can guess the reason for it," said Nick.

"Perhaps."

"You come because you, too, have seen in the paper that Bob Spale has broken jail?"

"That is nearly it, Mithter Carter!" cried Meyer, clapping his gloved hands. "But I should have come to-morrow, in any case."

"Why?" asked Nick promptly.

"Because I was approached by a scoundrel named Finowitz, who is acting for this bold fellow who calls himself Bob Spale, and whom, it seems, really caused the death of poor Mr. Herman Spale."

"Oh, you are willing to admit that Bob killed his nephew, are you?" queried Nick, with an uplift of his eyebrows.

"It would not be generous to you, Mr. Carter, for me to deny it," said the lawyer.

"Thank you! But it is not fear of hurting my feelings that brought you either to that opinion or to see me to-night," declared Nick grimly.

"Perhaps not, Mithter Carter! You are so blunt, you know!"

"I like a man better if he comes to the point without beating about the bush," hinted Nick.

"So I will do. This man Finowitz has approached me in a matter that I need only explain briefly to you. Whether this murderer who has escaped from the Tombs is Bob Spale or not, so he claims, and this lawyer has taken up his case with the hope of getting a big fee out of the estate. As I once had the honor to tell you, Mr. Carter, nobody can ever break the will of old Daniel Spale, nor of Herman, either. This villain, whether he is the man he claims to be or not, is shut out of that part of the estate forever. But he and his lawyer have got hold of the fact that there was a weak point in the will of Mr. Herman Spale's father—he was the produce dealer, you remember?"

Nick nodded.

"My father," continued Mr. Meyer, "drew that will, as well as Daniel Spale's. But there was a paragraph in it that he claimed, and always told me, weakened the whole instrument. Any testament purporting to be a will should be as straightly worded and brief as possible. It should directly devise the uses to which all the property of the testator is to be put—and so clearly that the most ignorant person may understand it at one reading. No better will was ever written than that of the man famous in history who had his lawyer write in the formal heading of the instrument, sum up his various properties, and then declared in so many words: 'All to my wife.'

"But this is aside from this matter. Mr. Herman Spale's father made a mistake in dictating his will, and he insisted in keeping the error in the instrument. He mentioned a secret trust which he wished his son to carry out, without stating in the will what that trust was. With the will he deposited with my father a sealed packet addressed to his son, which his son was to ask for after the will was probated.

"That fact was learned by this scoundrel Finowitz, or first by this Bob Spale himself, perhaps; and they are about to claim that the secret trust referred to a legacy left by Herman's father to the irresponsible Bob. Do you see the point, sir?"

"Very much so," admitted Nick Carter.

"Now, you must understand—and I told you so before—that all the Spale estate is destined to go to two educational institutions in the West. Mr. Spale was long interested in this scheme, and I admit that my own personal feeling is invoked in the cause of the college which he endows. These people endeavoring to break the old will of Herman's father will complicate the matter and perhaps hold up the payment of the legacies—even those to the negro servants who so faithfully served the Spales—for years."

"Yes?" said Nick.

"You probably anticipate my reason for coming to you, Mr. Carter," continued Meyer briskly. "You were fortunate enough in discovering the murderer of Mr. Spale before, and have a clearer knowledge of this complicated family affair than any of the police. Even before I learned that the prisoner had

escaped from the Tombs I made up my mind to retain you to clear up, if possible, the mystery surrounding this so-called Bob Spale, and help me defend the estate from being looted by the villain and this shyster lawyer, Finowitz."

Nick looked at him for several moments in deep thought. Then he sprang his first question:

"How about that secret trust, Mr. Meyer? Did it relate to Bob Spale?"

"I do not know," returned the lawyer calmly.

"You really do not know?"

"That is true. I never knew. My father never knew. The sealed packet was addressed to Herman Spale, and we were instructed to give it up to him on his demand. That is all."

"And Mr. Herman Spale never mentioned the affair to you?"

"He never took me into his confidence to that extent," said Meyer.

"He was really a very secretive man, then, Mr. Meyer?"

"He was. And miserly. Whatever the trust was he did not explain to me. I know nothing about it, nor have I found among his papers that I have now fully examined any mention of the command that his father considered of such grave importance."

"That is really quite a remarkable statement, Mr. Meyer," said Nick, watching the little lawyer closely.

"It has its peculiarities, that is so," admitted Meyer. "But, considering Mr. Herman Spale's character, it does not surprise me that he should be secretive about it. Of course," he added, "we do not know what the trust involved, and we do not know whether he obeyed his father's command or not. We are as much in the dark as are Finowitz and his client."

"My object in coming to you is to see if you will take up the investigation of the past of this man who claims to be Bob Spale, and get all information possible about him. Of course, the crime he has committed puts him beyond the pale; yet we may not be able to prove murder in the first degree against him, and sometime, if he should serve a time sentence and leave prison, all this might be raked up again and a demand made upon the administrators of Herman Spale's estate for an accounting. Do you see my position?"

"Very clearly," said Nick.

"This cross claim of a right to a part of Herman Spale's estate, made now by the man and his lawyer, will complicate affairs, too. I admit that I did not take kindly to your interference in the affair at first," said Meyer frankly, "but now I see the need of a careful investigation of all the secrets of the case, and especially do I believe that this murderer should be captured again."

"The police have probably done that by this time," said Nick hopefully.

"Perhaps. But I wish to engage you now, for fear the man has escaped for a time. I believe that the conditions warrant me spending some of the moneys belonging to the estate in retaining you, sir."

"Very well, Mr. Meyer, I will come into the case. If the man has not been recaptured, I will take up the search for him at once. Later I will endeavor to penetrate the mystery that seems to shroud him. Naturally, a man who has been away from his home for twenty-five years must have some kind of a story to tell. If he won't tell it, perhaps we may find others who know it, and will."

Mr. Alfred Meyer was shown out by Joseph, and Nick Carter immediately called his assistants, Chick and Patsy, into the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE STRINGS TO HIS BOW.

The benefit of the false partition behind which his assistants had remained during Nick Carter's interview with both Finowitz and Mr. Alfred Meyer was now shown. Time was saved because both Chick and Patsy had heard all that their chief had heard himself; it was only necessary now for Nick to give them their instructions, if, indeed, he proposed to use them at once on the case.

"But first of all let us find out from headquarters if Bob Spale has been recaptured. If he has," said Nick, "we will go to bed, and begin our investigation of his black past at a more fitting time."

He took his telephone receiver down from the hook and called for 300 Mulberry Street. When the new headquarters of the New York police department, now being built on the site of the old Central Market, is finished, "300 Mulberry" will be forgotten; but it is a telephone number to conjure with yet!

Nick called for a friend of his at headquarters, and asked about the break of the night before at the Tombs.

"They won't admit it over there, Nick," said his informant. "But I give it to you straight—every flattie in the city has been given a description of that long-armed rascal, Bob Spale, and a big gang of soft-shoe men are out on the job, too. He flew the coop, all right—and just how he did it is a mystery to many."

"Sure they haven't caught him, then?" queried Nick.

"You bet they haven't. And they're not likely to catch a man who's as smart as he proved to be. Not in a hurry, anyway. Are you interested, Nick?"

"Well, I arrested him in the first place, you know," said the detective.

"So I remember. And you discovered the murder he did, too? Well, there are some funny circumstances surrounding his getaway from the Tombs that might help you. If you'll come down, I'll get 'em for you at first hand."

"I'll send Chick," said Nick, "if that will do."

"Send him along," said the officer heartily. "He'll be welcome."

"So, you see, *your* work is cut out for you, Chick," said Nick, dropping the receiver and waving his first assistant away. "Learn all you can about that break. That is one string to my bow."

"And how many others have you got, chief?" asked Patsy, grinning.

"Two, for sure. I'll let you have the end of the second one—and you have probably guessed already what it is."

"Whittling Johnny?" hazarded Patsy Garvan.

"And his sister. The girl mentioned in the paper seems to suggest that Belle, whom you found out before was Whittling Johnny's sister. See if you can find them now."

"I'm on," said Patsy laconically. And, stopping for only a word with Adelina, he left the house on this errand which would carry him into the slums of the East Side of Manhattan.

What Nick's own part in the investigation was to be he did not say, nor will we inquire at the present moment, but instead follow Patsy on his jaunt downtown.

As young Garvan left the subway at the Brooklyn Bridge entrance, he suddenly shifted his gait and his manner for that of the young street tough, which character he could assume on such short notice. Patsy was rather a nice dresser when following his ordinary way of life; but he had slipped into some old togs before leaving the house, and now, by substituting a cap which he pulled from his pocket for the soft felt he had been wearing, and knotting a rather gaudy handkerchief loosely about his collarless throat, he gave a touch to his personal appearance which seemed to put him on a grade with the saloon loungers that he began to pass as soon as he got a few blocks nearer the water front.

Patsy was prepared to make changes in his appearance in the shortest possible time, and it has been proved time and again that the best and most successful disguise is a man's change of clothing and hat. Patsy slouched along, with his cap visor pulled down over one eye, giving stare for stare to the fellows he met, and on more than one occasion nodding to habitués of the locality into which he had ventured.

For Patsy was known by many, but not in his true character. He had been a street boy, and had knocked around lower New York until Nick Carter had come across him and had put him in the way of making something better of himself. Many, as we have said, knew Patsy Garvan, but they did not know he had ever changed his way of life.

In these lower quarters of the town people do not ask each other too insistently about their means of livelihood. If a man disappears for some time he may be off "on a job"—either honest or dishonest—or he may be "on the Island"!

Nobody stopped Patsy to question him, however. He kept steadily on until he reached a street not far from the docks on which was the tenement house where he knew the character called Whittling Johnny had lived with his crippled sister, Belle, up to the time of Bob Spale's arrest.

Whittling Johnny made his living on the docks by carving toys out of bits of wood, and was very dexterous in that work. The toys he sold to stores, and to whoever would buy them, until he had made up the few pennies daily that served to keep Belle in comfort. Then he spent the rest of his money and time in drinking with his pals. That he was a hopeless case all of his acquaintances admitted; but he had that saving love for his sister that, after all, kept a spark of manhood alive in his miserable soul.

Thirty years before, when Bob Spale's father had abused him, and he ran away, Whittling Johnny had been Bob's chum, and had taken him home to live with him until Bob disappeared from his old haunts entirely. If this strange creature that had come back to New York—now five years—and had laid the plot that resulted in Herman Spale's death, was actually Bob Spale, it was not at all surprising that he should have looked Whittling Johnny up and confided somewhat in him.

Evidently Johnny had some strong reason, too, for liking Bob Spale, for he had done his best to warn his friend when he learned that the police were after him, and now it looked as though Belle had shown her interest in her brother's chum by aiding him in his escape from the Tombs.

Patsy Garvan, coming to the house in question, did not venture in; but he hung about for a few minutes until he saw somebody whom he picked to be willing to gossip a bit. This was a man who came out and perched himself on a box in front of a little store near by, evidently for a breath of the evening air which was blowing up fresh from the river, before he retired for the night.

"Well, how's things?" demanded Patsy familiarly, seating himself beside the man. "Anything new about?"

"I don't know what you call new," returned the man lazily. "You belong around here?"

"Well, you couldn't lose me in these parts."

"Seems to me you've a familiar look. Are you one of Brady, the truckman's, boys?"

"Me name's Garvan," said Patsy; "a good ould French name. And many the time I've played hockey in this street."

"And broken my window, I bet, with the ball," grunted the storekeeper, who was an old settler in the neighborhood.

"Mebbe. But that was so long ago the debt's outlawed, cull," said Patsy coolly.

"So I'd suppose," returned the man. "And who do you want to hear about?"

"Whittling Johnny," said Patsy promptly.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the man. "That ne'er-do-well?"

"Say!" chuckled young Garvan, "don't you know

that the most interesting people in the world are not the goody-goodies?"

"I reckon you're right there, son," said the storekeeper, laughing, too. "Well, what about Whittling Johnny?"

"He's still living over there, isn't he?"

"No," replied the man, with no idea that he was quite shocking his interlocutor. "He and Belle have moved."

"When did that happen?" demanded Patsy, with a gulp.

"Just the other day. And they'd lived in those rooms for ten years, too, I guess."

"Where'd they move to?"

"That's got past me," said the man. "Nobody seems to know for sure. And yet, I don't suppose it is a bit mysterious, only the folks that do know haven't happened to come into my store."

"What did they do—skip in the night?" demanded Patsy.

"Why—I guess not. I didn't hear that they did so. They just took it into their heads to move, same as people will, and moved."

Nick Carter's young assistant was not a little troubled by the discovery that the man he was after had disappeared. And yet, on second thought, he was not surprised by it. If Whittling Johnny and his crippled sister, Belle, felt friendly enough toward Bob Spale to help him in his escape from the Tombs, naturally they would have guilty consciences, and expect the police to look them up.

"That's just what they'd do—make a noise like a hoop and roll away!" exclaimed Patsy Garvan. "And now the question is—how to find 'em?"

He did not sit idly talking for long with the storekeeper after having discovered that Whittling Johnny was no longer in the neighborhood, but got busy on the cold trail at once. He learned from a woman who lived in the tenement where the couple had resided so long that Johnny and his sister had been gone four days.

"They went early in the morning—before many of us was up. Sure, Belle hinted at it overnight, but we didn't know what she meant. She's a good woman; but I believe Johnny has got into some mess, and they've had to flit for that reason."

"Why, has any cop been rubberin' around?" asked Patsy.

"No; but Johnny is up to all the tricks, you know. Many a drunken sailor has he 'touched' down on the docks, I reckon. And he's been mighty flush of money betimes of late. He never come by it honest, I don't believe," declared the woman, shaking her head.

From another source Patsy found that the furniture—such as it was—of the missing couple had been carted away by a junk man in the neighborhood. He had bought it for a couple of dollars. The missing brother and sister had evidently moved to furnished apartments.

"And they don't propose to come back here," thought Patsy, as he wended his way to Front Street. "Whatever has happened to them, it means a big change in their lives. I bet that they have cast in their lot entirely with Bob Spale, and will work with him, and for him, till he finally escapes from the country, or is recaptured.

"Yet there may be another reason for their getting away from their old haunts. Maybe the girl agreed to smuggle the things into the jail to Bob with the proviso that she and her brother get away from their old haunts, and old companions, and start a new life elsewhere. That's a point to think of, too."

Patsy was aiming for a certain liquor saloon, a place to which he had been before in this inquiry, and where he knew Whittling Johnny frequently could be found when in funds. One of the proprietors of the place had known Johnny since they were kids together—and he had known Bob Spale, too.

"Say, I ain't seen that guy since the cops arrested the fellow that croaked the geezer out in Westchester. And he says his name's Bob Spale! Why, I seen Bob Spale's drowned body laid out on a dock down yonder, thirty years ago! It's a fake, and you take it from me, 'bo."

This from the saloon man with emphasis. Patsy seemed to have run up against a blank wall, and he began to think that he would have to go back to Nick and report a total failure.

Meanwhile, Chick had likewise followed his chief's instructions and had met the headquarters officer who had promised Nick all the information about Bob Spale's getaway in his possession.

"I can introduce you to the very guard who come near being croaked by the feller," declared the headquarters man. "He doesn't go on now till midnight, and I know where he'll drop in for a ball before he goes over to the Tombs. I'll catch a relief for my job here and go out with you, Chick."

"That's mighty kind of you," responded the young detective, "and I won't forget it."

The policeman found a café near by which was patronized a good deal by the prison officers, and, after they had sat there some time, a man came in, whom Chick's friend beckoned over to the table and introduced to Nick Carter's assistant.

"This is Ben Shay, Chick. And he's the fellow I was telling you of, Ben. If you want to see that guy who come near garroting you sent to the chair for his crimes, you open your heart to Chick here. Chick is working with Nick Carter, and it was Nick Carter who first got Spale right, and it will be Nick Carter who recaptures him, if such a thing happens—you can take my word for that."

"You're rather pessimistic about the abilities of your own crowd," laughed Chick. "Can't they even get an escaped jailbird?"

"If you were as close in the game as I am, and see what I see," grumbled the headquarters officer, "you'd be pessimistic, too. I see a lot of Gibson boys

that haven't learned the hard cases on their own beats yet taken off the hoof and put into plain clothes. Thunder! what do they know about the regular guns working to-day in New York? Not a thing!" declared the man, answering his own question.

"M'Caffery is doing the best he can, and he's an all-right man; but he can't do much with a lot of dummies such as they've put on his staff. I never did think much of you tin-badgers," added the old policeman, with a grin. "But all the good gun takers seem to have left the force and gone into your game. And Nick Carter always was a wonder—even the old inspector said that, and he is chary of praise at any time."

"You mean Inspector Byrnes?" queried Chick. "Yes, he has always been a good friend of Nick's, I know. But that is not to the point. Will Mr. Shay tell me what he knows about this Bob Spale getting away from the Tombs?"

"Sh!" warned Shay, behind the sharp of his hand. "'Tis not a matter we're supposed to talk about. And some sly jimmy might carry tales. The warden is dead sore over it, you know."

"I should think he would be," commented Chick.

"But, by holy! it warn't my fault," declared Shay, in defence.

"Do they intimate that it was?"

"Oh, you know how it is when a thing is done; there's always a lot of smart Alecks around that tell you what you'd ought to 'a' done—an' they warn't there, an' never was in the same pinch in their lives.

"In the first place, that guy, Spale, was as strong as a bull moose. I thought he was an old duffer, for he sat all crouched together in his cell whenever I had seen him—and, by Jove! he *ain't* a very big man. But he's quick as a cat and has the power of two men in his arms."

"So my friend Patsy Garvan says," chuckled Chick. "He had a taste of Bob Spale's ability to squeeze."

"Then he knows what the fellow's arms are like. I thought he was sick fast enough; he began to groan so, and muttered to himself. I warned him to shut up, and when he wouldn't I reckoned he must really be sick.

"Now, wouldn't I be foolish to ask for help to take a prisoner from a cell to the sick bay—heh? I unlocked the cell for to take him out; and when I went in after him he turned on me like a mad cat, slung some kind of a thin cord around my throat, and pulled it so tight that it blamed near cut my head off! See there! You can see the mark, and it's sore yet."

"It must be," admitted Chick.

"Well, I was dead to the world—no doubt of that. I couldn't have told what become of the cuss. But he certainly didn't go out through any of the proper exits—not even in disguise. All we could make of it was that he hiked it for the roof.

"I dunno as they've got the air ships workin' so that they can swoop down an' pick a feller off the roof of a building, if he signals 'em; but, by thunder! I don't see how else that laddy-buck got away. It certainly gets my goat."

"But if he had a long and strong rope?" suggested Chick.

"Say! would you want to tackle it yourself, mister?" demanded the prison guard. "Why, that guy must be an acrobat! There's plenty of copings, and so forth, for a man to let himself down upon—and wide window sills and abutments. But it would puzzle a steeple-jack to do the trick that Spale must have done."

"And how about the way he got the cords smuggled in to him?" queried Chick.

"That was another peculiar thing. I seen that girl myself—a quiet, nice-appearing girl as ever you see. Her calling for him occasioned some remark, for, aside from his lawyer, Spale had seen nobody since he was shut up.

"And she came on crutches. Mebbe they was a fake, and were only to help her hide the things she carried, for she wore a cape and pegged along kind of quiet-like."

"You have hit that right, I presume," said Chick. "Do you remember the appearance of the girl well enough to describe her to me?"

"Sure. She had a great hank of blond hair, and it wasn't no wig, you can bet! She might have been pretty if she hadn't been so pale, and she did have nice brown eyes. You know how them cripples usually look—kind of patient-like. I guess she was the real thing, after all, and needed to use them crutches; she couldn't have assumed that look she wore. But, thunder! if she helped that Spale to get away, she must be a bad one."

Chick had his doubts on this point. From what Patsy had said regarding Whittling Johnny and his sister, it might appear that if they helped Bob Spale it was out of gratitude. However, he did not argue the point with the prison officer, but urged him to tell what else he remembered about the girl. In the end he secured a very careful description of the supposed Belle, and then his informant had to return to duty, and Chick went back uptown.

He did not find his chief at home, however, so could not report what little he had learned regarding the escape of Bob Spale from jail. And had he known when he turned in just where Nick Carter himself was at that hour, and what he was doing, Chick certainly would not have fallen peacefully to sleep, as he did.

CHAPTER V.

NICK ON THE TRAIL.

When Patsy and Chick had started on their errands, Nick himself took up the third task, which he had immediately decided upon when he had agreed, at Mr. Alfred Clover's urgent request, to attempt the discovery of Bob Spale.

The detective's first tenet of belief was that it never paid to put off till to-morrow what you could do to-day! He had taught that doctrine to his associates, and he certainly followed it himself.

Bob Spale had already had eighteen, or more, hours' start. In that time a man can get a long way from the place of his confinement if he has friends to help him. But it is an axiom of criminal detection that escaped prisoners seldom "start at once and keep on moving!" Many circumstances may interfere to keep a fugitive from following any set plan for escape, and he is very likely to be found near the scene of his "break."

There was another point to be considered, too. Bob Spale might try to visit the place where he had lived before being apprehended for the murder of his nephew. He had been arrested without any warning whatsoever, for Nick Carter and his assistants had sprung upon him on a lonely piece of road between Corona and Flushing, on Long Island; and, although there were several houses in the vicinity, neither Nick nor the regular police had considered it necessary to hunt up the murderer's abode.

The man had been in jail, and on him were found evidences sufficient to prove him guilty of the crime of which he was accused. There had been no reason for hunting up his previous lodging.

But Nick was not likely to overlook the chance of the fellow going back to his old diggings—if only for a brief time. It might be possible to pick up his trail there; and, although he had sent both Chick and Patsy downtown to gather such details as they could, the course he took himself seemed more promising.

Telling Joseph only that he had business on hand, and that he might not return before breakfast time, Nick went out by a back way, dressed in rough garments, which fitted the character of a workingman, such as he proposed to assume.

Nick Carter, from the moment he left his house, too, changed his gait, dragging one limb a little, as though, at some time, it had been badly injured; and thus he slouched along to the ferry which would take him to Long Island City.

He would much rather have taken the journey into the wilds of Long Island by daylight; but he could not afford to waste the time before morning. A great deal may sometimes be accomplished in a few hours. Just as it was a fact that the fugitive, Spale, might make good his escape between that time and morning, so was it likewise true that the detective might capture him before daybreak.

To hunt in a suburban district for a man, or a place unknown, after nine o'clock at night was rather an unsatisfactory undertaking, for the people seemed to go to bed with the chickens. There was one house, however, that Nick knew he would find open. Not far from the spot where they had captured Spale was a road house—a tavern patronized both by automobilists and by natives of convivial habits. Toward this place the detective steered when he left the car.

He did not go into the more select café, for he wished to join the natives themselves, and knew that they would congregate in the barroom. So he shuffled in there and pushed his way up to the bar, before which a number of men were standing. They were not a nice-looking crowd, but Nick's first glance revealed no face that was absolutely *bad* among them.

Nor did they pay any particular attention to him, although he was a stranger. The barkeeper came forward and eyed him questioningly.

"What'll you take, friend?" he asked.

"Got any good old Jamaica?" asked the detective, in a hoarse whisper.

"Jamaica rum? Sure!"

"Gimme a drink of it, then—and throw a couple of shakes of red pepper into it, will yer?" said Nick, watching the bartender slyly.

"Heh?" said the fellow, plainly startled. "Come across with that again, will ye?"

Nick repeated the order.

"Well, I'm hanged!" ejaculated the man behind the bar. "I never expected to have two brass-throated guys come into this dump an' call for that mixture."

"What d'ye mean?" demanded the detective, scowling at the fellow as though offended by his remark.

"Now, don't git sore, 'bo," said the barkeeper. "That ain't a mixture that many of 'em calls for. I s'pose you know that?"

"I never bothered me head to think about it," growled the detective.

"Well, I been in this biz for twelve years, and that's only the second time a man ever asked me for rum and pepper," declared the other, putting the drink before his customer. "Ain't that fact enough to create surprise in me mind?"

"Mebbe," admitted Nick. Then he asked idly: "Who was the other feller?"

"I dunno who he was. I never saw him before."

"Mebbe I might know him," said the disguised detective; "how long ago was this?"

"A couple of months ago, I reckon," replied the other, briskly turning to wait on another customer.

Nick was enabled to get rid of the drink in the cuspidor at his feet without being observed, and after this sleight-of-hand performance, remained at the bar and asked for a cheap cigar when the barkeeper again had leisure to attend to him. Nick juggled the cigar, substituting one of his own for it, and, as he lit the weed, asked:

"How old was that guy you was tellin' me of, mister?"

"Perhaps he was sixty years old; but he was a rough-and-tough proposition, all right. And the way he flung two or three of them drinks into him was a caution!" said the barkeeper, with a laugh. "You and him must have learned the trick in the same school, for you got rid of yours without blinkin'."

"Where I come from that's an ordinary tonsil varnish," said Nick calmly.

"And where might that be?"

"It's a hot climate, all right," said the detective. "It's in the tropics."

"Where it's so hot outside that a feller don't mind a little scorchin' inside—heh?" queried the man behind the bar.

"That's about it," admitted the detective. "Say! didn't you ever see that feller again?"

"The man who favors your brand of poison?"

"Yep."

"Oh, I seen him go by; but he never stopped in again. I ain't seen him lately."

Nick was satisfied in his own mind that the barkeeper had seen and served a drink to Bob Spale—probably soon after Bob had come into this neighborhood to reside. Wherever Spale had spent the greater part of his life, he had certainly picked up some very peculiar habits, and garroting people with a finely braided hair line was not the only one of note.

His favorite drink seemed to be Jamaica rum and pepper, and wherever he called for it, the saloon man who served him was likely to remember the incident.

Bob Spale's personal appearance bore out the suspicion that he had lived a hard life in foreign parts. The truth was, he was scarcely fifty years of age. When he had had the final row with his father, and old Dan Spale had come down onto a certain East Side dock, caught his son as he came out of the river where he had been bathing with his companions, and "whaled" him most cruelly with a barrel stave—at that time Nick knew Bob to be less than twenty years of age. It was but a short few months after that that the fellow had disappeared from New York.

And but thirty years had elapsed since that time. Bob Spale looked much older than his real age, however. He was browned deeply by the tropical sun; his face was seamed and scarred, and his body bore, beside the tracings of strangely tattooed figures, deep and awful scars, as though made by the teeth and claws of wild beasts.

He had refused to tell a word about his past life—the life he had led out of New York; if he had any money at all, he had it well hidden, for there was little on him when arrested. In fact, there was, as Alfred Meyer, the Spale family lawyer intimated, a mystery about Bob Spale that should be fathomed.

By and by Nick bought another drink and obtained another minute's conversation with the busy barkeeper.

"I reckon that feller you spoke of lives around here, then?" he asked.

"I couldn't say as to that," returned the man. "And, as I told you, I haven't seen him lately."

He looked curiously at Nick, and finally asked:

"Are you looking for just such a feller, bo?"

"Mebbe I am," admitted Nick cautiously.

"I might put you next to a guy who would know. He don't let much get by him that happens around these corners. I s'pose you'd stand the price of a drink or two, wouldn't you?"

"I'll stand a dollar," returned Nick cautiously. "If the chap has any information that's of use to me I might dig up a little more. But I ain't buying no pig in a poke. Let's see the fellow that knows so much."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MIND THAT SLIPPED A COG.

"Come back in here and sit down," said the bartender, winking at Nick and nodding to a door at the end of the bar. "You'll stand another one of them cayenne cocktails while you wait a minute, eh?"

The detective nodded and passed into a little room, which seemed to lie between the barroom and the café. When he had first come into the hotel there had been an automobile in front of the side entrance, and bursts of laughter from the café and the occasional clink of glasses as the one waiter went to and fro through the swinging door which separated the place from the barroom had assured the detective that there was a party of visitors there.

All the time, too, there had been the jangle of a piano in the café—somebody was banging out a medley of popular songs and ragtime melodies; now the party was making a noisy exit and the piano music ceased.

As Nick seated himself at the single table in the small room, which, he saw, opened into the café, likewise, the piano music commenced again; but it was entirely different from what had been drummed out before. Somebody had begun to touch the keys dreamily, lingeringly, bringing forth a harmony of tone that the detective would scarcely have believed lay hidden in the much-abused café piano.

It was a master touch that drew song from the ivories; but the bits of music were vague, and the player seemed unable to concentrate his thought upon one series of sounds. He was improvising, Nick was sure; but one theme was never followed for more than two or three bars; then an entirely different subject seemed to take possession of the player's mind, and he would strike a different melody. But Nick, who knew good music when he heard it, and always had his box at the Metropolitan during the opera season, was convinced that no ordinary musician touched the keys of the café piano. And had he heard Paderewski playing in a music hall he would have been little less surprised.

In a moment the bartender found time to slip out from the bar, while the waiter was on guard, and came into the little boxlike room where the detective sat. He grinned at the latter, jerking a thumb toward the café from which the music proceeded, and opened the door connecting with that apartment.

"Hello, professor!" he shouted. "Here's a guy that's so stuck on your playing that he wants to give you a drink. Come in here."

The lingering, tender touch of the musician ceased. Nick heard a shuffling step, and there appeared in the doorway a tall, stoop-shouldered man who, at first

sight, the detective thought was a patriarch. His waving hair, which had been jet-black once, was streaked peculiarly with white locks. There was no shine to the hair at all now, and it looked more like a bushy wig than a natural head of hair. The badly trimmed ends touched the man's velvet collar.

But a second glance assured Nick that the musician was not an old man. His face was cleanly shaven, and, although lined by a perfect network of little wrinkles, it had little appearance of age. It was colorless, rather brown, as though the man spent considerable time in the open air, and there was a stare in the uncertain brown eyes that told the story of their owner only too well.

"This is Professor Mahoney. Professor, let me make you acquainted with my friend, Mr. Thomas Fortune Ryan. Mr. Ryan, Mr. Mahoney," said the barkeeper, hugely enjoying his own joke and winking at Nick while he made the introduction. "And Mr. Ryan wants to know your favorite beverage, professor."

The brown eyes brightened just a little and the waxlike face of the musician showed a breath of animation.

"If I may," he said, in a singularly sweet voice, "I will drink a small glass of port wine. Port wine agrees with me," he added, rubbing his long and white hands together and sidling apologetically into the seat across the table from Nick.

"I shall be pleased to have you select what you wish, professor," interposed Nick, before the bartender could continue his "jollying." "And I am happy to make your acquaintance."

The bartender went out grinning, and the musician said softly:

"Of course, I am not silly enough, sir, to believe that you are the great traction magnate. But these boys like to think they fool me—and they mean no harm. But I am really Professor Mahoney—once that name was a promising one in my art."

"And may be again?" suggested Nick.

"No," sighed the man. "Not now. I know that I am only the wreck of a man. You suppose me very old, sir?"

"No. Something has given you an ancient appearance that your years do not bear out."

"I am thirty-eight. But I am only a wreck," murmured the professor. "You see, they tell me I worked too hard. And then, I—I had trouble. I—I don't just know what that trouble was now. I can't remember it, and perhaps it is well that I cannot. That is why I drifted to this place. I would never see any of my old friends here—if I had friends—and so cannot be reminded of what happened to me before I was ill.

"I only wish I might remember one thing—just one. I would like to be able to remember the pretty music that I begin to play now and then. It seems to me that I must have known a lot of pretty music once—and I never find it printed on the music sheets that I manage to buy. Perhaps it was my own music; but now I cannot remember it long enough to write it down. That's strange, isn't it? But all this can't interest you, sir," said the man, as the bartender entered with the drinks.

"On the contrary," returned Nick kindly. "It interests me very much."

The bartender winked and grinned at the detective again, and went out rattling the change Nick gave him in his apron pocket. He evidently considered Professor Mahoney a good joke. That the musician's mind was out of gear there could be no doubt. But he was a soul astray, and was to be pitied, not made fun of!

Besides, there was something strangely appealing in Professor Mahoney's look and manner. Comparatively a young man—for thirty-eight should have been at the beginning of his career—he had the look and mannerisms of the aged.

"When did I have the honor of playing for you, sir?" queried the professor, with courtesy. "Was it before I—I was unfortunate?"

Nick determined at the outset to be perfectly straightforward with the strange musician, and he said instantly:

"That, I am afraid, was one of our friend the barkeeper's jokes. I have never had the pleasure of hearing you play at all, professor, save as you were running over the keys just now."

A dull flush rose in the man's withered cheek. "I am afraid you did not hear much of value, sir," he hastened to say. "I am obliged to play those airs that are popular here; it is my bread and butter."

"I understand," said Nick briskly. "But my reason for speaking with you has nothing whatever to do with your music. I was making some inquiries about a man for whom I am looking, and the bartender said that you might be able to assist me in finding him."

"Ah!" exclaimed the professor. "And who is it?"

"A man who came in here only once, and that some two months ago; but the barkeep seemed to think you might know something about him. Do you remember him?" And Nick went on to describe Bob Spale's peculiar appearance.

Before he was half through the musician started from his chair and cried out for Nick to stop, shaking his head violently.

"No, no!" he cried. "Tell me no more of that creature. I know who he is—I could not forget him. He is very much out of tune, that man! Indeed, he has no suggestion of harmony about him. I have never seen a man so discordant—never in all my life!"

"Out of tune?" murmured Nick, really puzzled.

"Yes, yes!" cried Professor Mahoney, nodding now violently. "Do you not see? Everything in the world should be attuned to some kind of harmony. It was intended so. It is so in the plan of the Creator. Of course, the birds, and the flowers, and all growing life is in harmony. That is one reason, sir, why I

remain in this country place. When I am not confined here I am roaming about these fields and woods. Harmony—harmony—all about me *there!*

"There is nothing discordant even in a squeaky cart wheel," declared the professor, with a smile. "It has a harmony of its own. The bark of a dog is in tune. Almost every dumb creature has a voice which harmonizes. But some men are so wicked that they are out of accord with everything in nature. Ah, sir! *Now* you will say Professor Mahoney is certainly mad?" concluded the musician, rather wistfully.

"I am less likely to think that than you can imagine!" cried Nick warmly.

"Thank you, sir."

"But tell me," said Nick; "why did you find this man I speak of so greatly out of harmony?"

"Ah!" cried the musician; "must we speak of him? I dislike remembering what he was like, even. That creature tore to shreds the membrane of my very soul! This is wild talk, you will say? I should not let myself speak of such things; but discord affects my soul more severely than blows would my body!"

"I have no wish to make you suffer, sir," said Nick gravely; "but if you can tell me something about that individual you will perhaps aid my inquiry much."

"Dear sir!" exclaimed the musician, "you have shown me a courtesy which is seldom vouchsafed me in this place. I should be grateful enough to put aside my childishness for a time. I will do so. There! it is done. Tell me what you would know about that evil man—for that he must be a soul in complete bondage to the forces of evil, I am sure!" declared Professor Mahoney.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOUSE IN THE HOLLOW.

"I will conquer my distaste of that creature, and tell you all that is connected with him in my mind," continued the musician firmly. "The barkeeper, who is not a bad boy at heart, knows that I am striving to train myself to remember the personal appearance and the words and actions of every person who comes under my notice in this place. And I have a reason for so trying, sir.

"I—I fear that unless I keep my mind employed, and seek to strengthen my memory in some such way, I may never remember those things which I seek continually to recover. Yes, whether it would be well for me to remember my past or not, I am spurred by a consuming desire to know it, nevertheless!

"However, let me proceed. It is of this man of whom you speak that I must tell you," pursued the professor, shuddering slightly. "I remember clearly the afternoon that he came in here. I was eating my dinner in a corner of the barroom when he opened the door. Indeed, sir, it is a truth that his very presence affected me, even before he uttered a sound.

"And his first utterance was not a spoken word. There is something strangely animal-like about that creature. He does not seem as much human as he is beast! You will laugh at this, of course; but he is not attuned to anything in humanity! I declare it," said Professor Mahoney impressively.

"His first sound, as he came in at the door and crossed to the bar, was like nothing so much as the roar of a wild beast—the cry of a dumb creature, perhaps trying to make its desire known! I am afraid, sir, that you will consider me quite mad now."

But Nick Carter shook his head and motioned the musician to go on. He was keenly alive to the significance of this story, and he doubted much whether the man whose mind had slipped a cog had not a finer appreciation of such psychological questions than the ordinary run of entirely "sane" men!

Nick remembered the awful cry of rage and fear that Bob Spale had uttered when Patsy had leaped upon him the night of his apprehension and arrest. It had sounded like the mad roar of a dumb beast, indeed! The means by which the assassin of Herman Spale had left the runaway automobile, after killing his victim, pointed to the agility and acrobatic training of an ape!

And only on this very evening, while discussing the man with his assistants, Nick himself had spoken of the strange, animal-like odor which seemed to cling to Bob Spale. It is true that every human being has a distinct odor, which is distinguishable to the keener scent of the dog and other dumb animals; but few human beings can distinguish their fellows apart by the scent emanating from the body. The blind are helped—sometimes unconsciously—by this fact in nature; but ordinary people have not the olfactory nerve so keenly developed as to recognize either friend or foe by scent.

Therefore, the detective listened to Professor Mahoney's words with a mind entirely free of bias. Because a man may have slipped one cog in his brain works, it does not follow that he is utterly irresponsible.

"I never call any man mad who has as much to recommend him to my enjoyment of his society as you have, professor," declared Nick, smiling frankly at the musician. "You suggest a psychological question that is worthy of serious consideration. But go on with your account of this strange fellow."

"You encourage me, sir," said the musician. "I will say exactly what I felt to be the fact at the time of the man's entrance. He was thirsty. He doubtless had walked some distance in the dust, and he felt the pangs of thirst. *His animal nature cried out when he tried to put his need into human speech!*

"It was as though he were really more brute than man, you see," explained Professor Mahoney. "Instantly, I grant you, he recovered his power of speech, or remembered that he was among men, and gave his order to the bartender. But that first inhuman cry was the voice of his brute nature—a veritable jungle cry!"

"I will not gainsay you," said Nick [illegible]

"He so shocked and troubled me," [illegible] fessor; "that I left my meal and [illegible] I could not be under the same roof with such a creature. I—I will not try to explain to you, sir, what actual suffering his presence caused me. That man cannot be in accord with anything human—no, sir!"

"I tried to quiet myself with a walk. Returning, at a corner of the road I came unexpectedly upon the [illegible] man! I was so [illegible] for a moment that I could scarcely notice what he was about. Then I saw that he was snapping his fingers at, and calling to his side, a stray dog that slouched along the road.

"I must admit I was surprised to see him show any friendliness toward a stray pup. It seemed out of keeping with his tone. I hoped that, after all, there might be some string of his nature attuned to that of his fellow men.

"The dog seemed to distrust him. It shrank, and trembled, and for a moment seemed about to run. But it was a forlorn little beast, bedraggled with dirt and evidently perishing for food. The man continued to snap his fingers, urging it to approach.

"And, indeed, he may have had some uncanny power over the little brute; for it seemed as though, in spite of itself, it crept toward him on its belly. He paid no attention to me, and I swear to you, sir, I was unable to move away myself.

"Suddenly, when the dog was almost within reach of his hand, he straightened up, uttered a sound that I *must* call a roar, for it was not a laugh, nor did it have any attribute of human laughter; and swinging his heavily shod foot, he kicked the little dog clear across the road!

"I—I screamed, sir! I was guilty of womanish tears. I could not help it. And the great brute looked at me, and grinned, and passed on without a word. The little dog lay gaping and sobbing out its life where it had fallen in the ditch. I hastened to the drug store, obtained a box with a tight cover and some chloroform, and put it out of its misery, after which I buried it. I should," concluded the musician earnestly, "have buried that brute in human form, after chloroforming him, with a better conscience!"

"And, by Jove, I don't blame you!" cried the detective. "The fellow is, indeed, beyond the pale."

The musician nodded, shuddering again, as though he actually felt physical pain at the remembrance of what he had seen.

"And that is not the worst I can tell you, sir," he whispered. "I did not know where he lived then——"

"But you know now?" queried the detective hastily.

"I know where he lived. Of late, thank Heaven! I have not seen him pass the house here nor have I met him on my walks."

"So you do not really know whether he has left the neighborhood or not?"

"[illegible] I [illegible]," said [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

"So I was, sir. How I ramble! I am afraid I show my weakness by wandering from the track," said Professor Mahoney, smiling sadly. "But I will come to the point now in a word: In that house this terrible man took up his abode.

"None of the neighbors knew when he came, exactly; he was there one day, that is all, and the house seemed to be comfortably furnished. He made the repairs himself, for the place had had a bad name since the tragedy; some even believed it was haunted." And the musician smiled.

"The boys had stoned the windows, and now and then, I suppose, wayfarers had slept there. But this man put shutters to all the lower windows—tight board shutters; and they were almost always closed. His house is in a hollow. There is a row of houses on a road just above the place, but the hollow is fenced in and belongs to the house he occupied.

"It was rather a pretty spot when it was abandoned. I used to walk that way frequently. Behind it is a wooded knoll, and I have often gone there to see the sun rise.

"I had not heard who was in the house, when I went over there early one morning. A mist was rising and the sun was not yet up when I reached my usual station on the top of the little eminence.

"I could not see the other houses; but in the hollow the mist had entirely risen, and I could plainly see the house so long abandoned. And just as the mist began to turn rosy in the first rays of the sun, I saw the back door of the house in the hollow open, and that terrible man came out.

"He seemed to have just risen from his bed, and had on only his shirt and pants. He stood stretching himself and yawning on the doorstone. He is a strange-looking man," added the musician, with a shudder. "His arms are enormously long and his bared chest was covered with hair. He actually looked more like a huge monkey than a human being.

"And then he inflated his chest and began to pound his clinched fists upon it, harder and faster as he warmed to the exercise. And he opened his lips and emitted a roaring sound like nothing human," cried the earnest musician. "Such a sound, I verily believe, was never heard outside of the jungle. It was a hollow, reverberant roar, and seemed to shake the morning air.

"And it echoed—or seemed to echo—from the house behind him. At first I thought it was an answering roar from some other being like himself in the house. But I inquired later, and nobody ever saw any creature about the house in the hollow but that man himself. So it must have been an echo.

"I said something about it to the boy at the bar here," concluded the musician, "and he was highly amused. Everything I say seems to impress these people with the fact that I am different from themselves."

CHAPTER VIII.

A MYSTERY.

That Nick Carter had been deeply interested in the story which Professor Mahoney had told goes without saying. Whatever might have been the mental limitations of the strange musician, his tale was connected, and impressed Nick as being a bare relation of facts.

The peculiar impression Bob Spale had made upon the highly strung temperament of Mahoney did not so surprise the detective. Spale had seemed a peculiar creature to Nick; there was not only a mystery about the man's past, but there was a mystery about himself!

Nick was troubled by no superstitions; he did not believe in either the possession of evil spirits or in the possibility of a human being falling under the control of an entirely brutal nature. There was no Jekyll-Hyde business in this strange case of Bob Spale.

But all that Mahoney had told him pointed to the fact that Bob Spale was not like other men; and Nick had known that before. Now he merely asked the musician to be a trifle more explicit regarding the locality of the house in the hollow; and, having obtained his directions, he shook hands with the professor and quietly slipped out through the café, so as not to be further questioned by the young man behind the bar.

He remembered quite clearly the direction of the spot where Bob Spale had been previously arrested. It was on this road, at the junction of it and a branch street. The vicinity was not at all built up; but he remembered that Patsy had said this side road had several cottages on it, and he believed Bob Spale must have lived in one of them.

According to the story of Professor Mahoney, the house that had been occupied by Spale was down in a hollow beyond this row of cottages that Patsy had seen. Nick found the side street, and, although it was a cloudy night, he walked steadily along this road, which had neither street lights or curbed sidewalks.

"The suburbs are all right in daylight," muttered the detective; "but I do not—and never did—fancy tramping through Lonelyville after sunset. Hello!"

His eyes had become sufficiently used to the uncertain way to note that on the left the roadside fell away steeply. There was a fence to guard the pedestrian or vehicles from a fall; but it was a simple matter to dodge under the rails and descend the hill. There was a path winding down into the hollow, and as Nick went on he could see the yellow ribbon of it unwinding below him in the dusk. At its foot loomed suddenly the house in question, without a spark of light showing through either the shuttered windows on the lower floor or the casements above.

Nick stopped until his eyes became so used to the gray twilight that he could quite distinctly make out the form of objects within twenty feet or more. He saw a tree stub—evidently stricken by lightning in

some past tempest, and broken off some fifteen feet above the ground; there was some hovel—a dog house, or a hen house—near; and on the other hand was a well house with the bucket hanging from the chain.

He moved carefully to avoid these, progressing slowly, but finally making the entire circuit of the building without seeing a pencil of light through the shutters, or hearing a sound from within. But, of course, he was not very near the building.

Having made quite sure that there was no sentinel posted outside of the house, he ventured nearer now. He saw the hood over the back-door stoop, and he crept to that and, after a moment, put his ear to the keyhole. There was something moving in the kitchen, upon which the door plainly opened; but whether it was a human being or some domestic animal—a dog or a cat—Nick could not judge.

He thought that he heard a faint whine, and then a prolonged sigh and a rustle, as though the creature had settled itself upon a bed to sleep. At least, he was sure that he could distinguish regular, audible breathing—and the sound increased after a little until it became a pronounced snore!

Could it be a house dog shut into the place—and since Bob Spale went away, perhaps? Yet the detective had no reason for supposing that the fugitive, or one of his friends, had not been recently in the house. Indeed, he was here himself to-night in the hope of finding Spale on the premises.

The snoring continued regularly, and Nick made another circuit of the house, listening at each window for some minutes, to try and learn if there were any other living creature inside, asleep. He heard no sound until he got back to the kitchen again.

To himself he thought: "That breathing does not sound just like a man. It is more like a child—or an animal. I have heard a tired dog gasp in just that way and snore faintly. Now, the professor declared that the neighbors had never seen anything or anybody about this house but Spale himself.

"I am sure enough facing a peculiar situation. It is a mystery that I did not look for when I started out this evening. I expected to either find Spale here, or, perhaps, Whittling Johnny or his sister. Have they left a guard in the shape of a dumb creature? I am quite positive there is nothing else in the house."

The remembrance of what Professor Mahoney had told him regarding Spale's peculiar actions early in the morning smote the investigator. The musician thought that Spale's strange roarings were echoed from the house. Was there really some creature confined there, and no man at all?

The thought that he was alone in this strange quest did not trouble Nick Carter for a moment. And now that he was on the spot he did not care to waste more time. He proposed to make some attempt to find out what or who was shut up in the place.

If Spale and his friends were lying in ambush here, Nick was quite determined enough to meet them single-handed. He was armed, and he had faced and captured many a band of desperate criminals. He looked only to have Bob Spale himself for a serious opponent; and he certainly should not let the fellow come to close enough quarters to use his long arms, as he had with Patsy.

Nick approached the kitchen door again, and, standing at one side, so that his body was sheltered by the doorpost, he scratched with his finger-nail upon a panel of the door. He timed his own breath with the regular snoring of the creature inside, and he had schooled himself to breathe very lightly, anyway. The night was very still, and as he waited all that he could really hear was the snoring and his finger-nail scratching louder and louder upon the panel.

At length the scratching permeated the cloud of sleep that shrouded the creature behind the door. The snoring stopped abruptly and there followed a sleepy grunt—half whine and half moan. Nick scratched on the board again.

At once there was a movement inside. Some heavy body seemed to spring to the floor, as though from a couch. The detective could hear the floor boards creak. The being inside breathed heavily, but sharply, as though trying to smother the sound.

Nick remained quiet, and heard the creature move uncertainly about. Again the moaning recommenced, and, finally, a grunt and the sound of the thing in the house settling back on its couch again. Whether it was man or beast the detective determined to bring matters to a focus. He tapped lightly on the door.

Instantly the thing bounded erect and moved across the floor. It was coming to the door, and Nick crouched back, and half drew a handy pistol. The creature fumbled at the door latch and whined again. It uttered some gruff sounds which, so the detective thought, might have been words, only in a language that he had never heard before.

The fumbling at the latch continued a minute, and Nick's muscles stiffened for some kind of an attack. But the door did not open. After a bit the creature moved away and recommenced its plaintive whine.

Nick Carter had seldom been so mystified in all his experience. The thing in the house was no dog; he was quite confident that it walked to the door erect. And yet, could such sounds as it made come from a human being?

Grown desperate at last by this uncertainty, the detective crept closer to the door, and this time rapped firmly upon it. With a sudden snarl, which plainly showed rage, the creature inside bounded across the room. It seized the latch with no uncertain hand this time and wrenched the door open!

Nick could see nothing. The opening was densely black, and he could not judge by any appearance whether it was man or monkey that stood there. But some living creature had flung open the door and stood poised on the sill.

A strange, musky smell was wafted to Nick's nostrils. He heard the heavy breathing close at hand.

Then suddenly there was another hoarse snarl and the creature was upon him!

The detective had miscalculated in one particular. He had forgotten that, although he could see nothing in the doorway himself, the creature standing there had better eyesight than he possessed.

Nick had been seen instantly by the beast, and before he could use a gun his wrist was seized by such a powerful clutch that the detective's hand was paralyzed for the time being, and the weapon fell to the ground.

Without a word the Unknown grappled Nick to his breast, his other arm enfolding the detective and squeezing him with the pressure of a vise. Nick realized that he was in the clutch of some half-dressed creature; he felt that the powerful arms were covered with hair, but the body against which he was held was clothed in part, at least.

These discoveries were instantaneous, however. As the grasp of the Unknown tightened on him, Nick realized that he had the battle of his life before him. And the animal-like roar sent forth by his antagonist was enough to chill the blood of the bravest man!

Nick Carter was an athlete who, although he never overtrained, never allowed his body to get out of condition. His muscles, when expanded, were like iron bands; his flesh was too firm to bruise easily. But the grip this creature obtained upon his body almost expelled the breath from his lungs at once! He had lost his gun, and that right hand felt powerless; but his left shot up and outward and chanced to clutch the hairy throat of his enemy.

And well for him was it that he made that motion and obtained that grip. He heard the jaws of the creature come together with a clash, and realized that, had he not caught the throat and so held the powerful jaws away from him, the beast's teeth would have met in his flesh.

Man or monkey, the creature was nearly of Nick's own height. Bob Spale's own description fitted this figure, but if it was a human being who had Nick Carter in his clutch, the detective had never wrestled with such a man before. No exponent of the art of jiu-jitsu—with which science Nick was entirely familiar—had ever gained such an immediate "strangle" hold on the great detective as did this unknown creature.

For the first half minute Nick felt himself powerless, save only to fend off the gnashing teeth of the brute. His right wrist was held in a crushing grip, and he could scarcely expand his chest muscles against the fearful pressure brought to bear upon them.

But this weakness was only momentary. Steadying himself upon his feet, he made the first discovery that helped him: for as a wrestler Nick Carter had few equals, and that because he wrestled with his brains as well as with his body!

This discovery was that his antagonist was barefooted. The advantage this gave Nick can easily be seen. This was no game of wrestling for points! It was a struggle for life; the detective knew that his enemy would kill him in a moment if he could.

But as they swayed together on the bare earth before the door, Nick could dig his heels into the soil and secure a better footing than the other. Besides, the detective's heavy shoes came in contact more than once with the unshod feet of his antagonist, and whenever this occurred Nick stamped down upon the other's pedal extremities with all his force!

The creature kept up a low growling sound, still gnashing its teeth as though seeking to sink them in Nick Carter's flesh. The latter felt that his own spurt of strength had not mastered the beast, and he knew it must wane again. He could not keep up the struggle for many minutes more!

CHAPTER IX.

NICK LOSES THE FIRST ROUND.

Nick Carter was fighting for life, and he could not have analyzed his thoughts had he tried to do so. The long arm of the creature wound him about like the coil of a boa constrictor, and the pressure on his chest was almost unbearable.

His right hand, being bent behind him, was of no use, either. But the grip of his left digits on the hairy throat of his antagonist made the creature gasp and wheeze. Nick squeezed the harder, boring into the muscles of the throat, until it seemed to him as though the ends of his fingers must meet!

No man whom he had ever tackled before could have borne the pain of that grip. Yet this brute did not relax its own hold in the least. Its grasp on Nick's wrist, and the coil of its arm about him, seemed locked as are a bulldog's jaws when it once gets its teeth set in an enemy.

There in the pitch darkness, at the bottom of the hollow and by the open door of the lone house, the two swayed and struggled, trampling over a considerable piece of ground. Nobody came to the assistance of the Unknown, and of course Nick could expect no help himself.

He had sent both his assistants on other errands when he started for this place in the suburbs; and they would not even know where to find him. There was no creature that the detective knew who might aid him at this fearful pass.

Now and then Nick's foot struck against the dropped gun. Had he been able to wrench himself free and grasp this, or seize the other pistol which was secreted in his clothing, he would have had the brute at his mercy. But he dared not loosen his hold on the creature's throat, and he could not pull it to the ground.

So they strained together, the beast gasping and growling like a dog worrying a bone, and Nick fighting his own breath coming harder and harder. Again they came in contact with the doorstone, or step. It seemed as though a large flat rock had been im-

bedded in the soil before the house door, and whenever Nick caught the bare foot of his antagonist on the rock, he had stamped down upon it with his own shod foot.

Now he expended his final strength in forcing the creature well upon the stone, and, getting upon it himself, placed his right shoe upon one of the bare feet of the creature. He ground his whole weight down upon this foot, and almost instantly his antagonist showed that the punishment was too much for him.

There burst from him a scream like nothing human! There was an answering shout somewhere near, Nick realized; but all he could do then was to cling to his enemy and keep grinding down upon the foot.

The clutch of the beast weakened. It let go of Nick's wrist, and with a sweep of that hand half tore the detective's coat and waistcoat from his body. Its claws seemed like the talons of a bird of prey!

Unsuccessful in gaining its point of tearing Nick's flesh, the brute let go the coil of the arm that held the detective close to its own body. Instantly Nick took advantage of this, and with a mighty effort he broke free from the beast. He threw his antagonist, at the same time, against the doorpost, and the crash of the collision seemed to shake the house.

Nick leaped back, and in an instant would have secured his other pistol and have shot at random into the black doorway. For the moment, at least, he had bested his enemy.

But while the Unknown was still groaning and gnashing its teeth, and the half-breathless detective was dragging his gun out, two figures rushed down upon him out of the darkness, one on either side, and a heavy blow—the blow of a blackjack—fell upon his head!

Nick Carter spun about, dazed, groping for his antagonists; and then he pitched headlong to the ground. He heard that enraged roar again—a sound half human, half beastly—and then for the moment he entirely lost consciousness.

When he in some measure recovered, he knew he was being dragged, like a sack of potatoes, over a rough board floor. There was the fierce roaring ringing through the house, and he heard a gruff voice exclaim:

"Get him inside—hurry up there! I can't hold this devil off forever. He'll tear his heart out if he gets at him again!"

Nick was flung down upon the floor, and a door was banged shut and the key turned in the lock. In a moment a body was cast furiously against the barrier, so that it shook, and the whole house trembled with it. The breathless detective heard the same gruff voice cry out:

"You'll not break that door down, you fool! Stop it, I tell you!"

He seemed to emphasize his statement by a kick, for there was a whine uttered by the creature and it scrambled away from the door.

"Great heavens!" whispered a shrill voice. "He'll turn on you yet. Look at him!"

"If he turns on me," replied the gruffer voice, "I'll eat him alive—and he knows it. Don't show him you're afraid, Johnny. If you do he'll surely have your meat some day."

"But I *am* afraid of him," said the other.

"He hasn't got to know it, has he? How do you suppose I've got along with 'em all my life—and with worse creatures than him? The minute they know you're afraid, it's all up with you. I've seen a man in a cage of hyenas show the white feather. Just so long as you're their master there ain't nothin' so sneakin' an' scared as hyenas. But them beasts saw their trainer drop his whip; and when he went to pick it up, quicklike, he kicked it out between the bars of the cage.

"Now, it warn't the *whip* they was afraid of. You couldn't scarce hurt a hyena with a rawhide whip; but it was the man they was watchin'. They seen him change color and waver. He started toward the door of the cage. Why, if he hadn't showed the white feather he could have laid down there and rolled all over the cage with 'em. But the minute he let 'em see he was scared they went for him!

"They had him down and was chewin' the bones of him in a twinkling! Yes, we got him out; but he would never be a whole man again, and he never could make good as a trainer again. It ain't no trade; it's nerve; that's all there is to that business. And the minute a feller loses his nerve he'd better go to peddlin' pink popcorn—you take it from me!"

"But that's an awful pet to have round with one," grumbled the other man.

"I got used to havin' 'em around. And I jest about lived with 'em for years and years. I knowed 'em in their native wilds, as the feller says. Huh! I reckon I'm more'n ha'f a ourang myself. I can make 'em understand me like I was their blood relation. If you'd gone through what I went through down in Borneo you'd wonder whether you was man or monkey yourself.

"But that's enough o' that," added the speaker brusquely. "We ain't here to bandy words. We want to get what we're after and then light out. Who d'ye s'pose that feller is that he most finished? I never knowed him to attack a man before unless I set him on."

"Perhaps it was only some tramp that tried to get in for a night's sleep."

"Well, I reckon he, or his friends, won't try it again. Mebbe he was hungry, and that's why he was so savage. No! there's part of a bunch of bananas left yet, and he had two bunches and some other fodder when I went away. Lonesome, mebbe. Anyway, he won't be alone any more. Come on here, you get into these things. Gee! his feet are all bloody. I'll have to bandage them. I've a good mind to finish that tramp off myself for this!" And the speaker's voice became a low growl again.

"No, you won't!" cried the other man earnestly. "Don't you do any such thing. Ain't you in trouble enough as it is?"

"Oh, you're a chicken-hearted critter, Johnny," scoffed the rougher voice.

"Thank Heaven that I am! I'll not draw an easy breath till you're out of the country. And I believe, on my life, that coming here and fooling with this beast will be the ruin of you after all."

"I reckon not. Anyhow, I want him. If I get caught, all right; but I don't care to go free without *him*."

"It's a mystery to me," groaned the other. "I never heard of such a strange case."

"Lots o' things you ain't heard of," growled the second man. "Now, let's see. Are we ready? How about that guy in the other room? Did you tie him up?"

"Of course not!"

"Well, you're going to, then."

"He's bad enough hurt, as it is," objected the less bloodthirsty man. "You knocked him silly. If we tie him up and leave him here it may be days—perhaps weeks—before anybody enters the house to rescue him. You know you paid the rent of the place six months in advance."

"Well, what is he to us?" demanded the other, in a perfectly hardened tone.

"I tell you I won't let you do such things!" cried Johnny. "Besides, what would Belle say?"

This seemed to have some effect upon Bob Spale—for Nick was confident that it was he, and that his companion was Whittling Johnny—and he growled a less bloodthirsty rejoinder:

"I leave it to you, then, Johnny, to say what we'll do with him. We can't afford to be followed, you know."

"How'll he foller us, even if he wanted to, when we get in that car?" demanded his friend. "Huh!"

"But we got to walk a mile to the car, and his long suite ain't walking," said Bob, referring with emphasis, as he always did, to the beast he had in charge.

"I'll fix it," declared Johnny. "Leave it to me. Now, hold that brute; I'm going in the other room."

There was evidently an attempt made by the man-monkey to reach the door, behind which he knew his enemy to be, when Johnny started toward it. Bob Spale spit out an oath, and there followed the sound of a blow and a cry from the ourang.

"Keep still, you!" ordered Bob. "Go on, Johnny. And hurry up, now. We don't want to get back too late to that ranch—and it bein' our first day on duty there. That agent chap will be lookin' for another janitor for his sky-scraper apartment house if we don't keep good hours."

"Shut up!" commanded Whittling Johnny, and opened the door, dodging into the room where Nick had been cast.

The detective had scarcely moved, although he had heard very clearly all that had been said. He appeared, however, to be only half conscious when Johnny bent over him.

"The poor geezer!" muttered the wharf rat. "That crack on his koko was enough to do him up for good —an' that's no lie!"

Nick had been ready to turn over and seize the fellow by the throat, effectually choking back any outcry he might make; but these words held his attention and made the wary detective change his mind. Little as he believed Whittling Johnny was to be trusted, it was evident that the fellow was not so bad at heart. There was more than a modicum of tenderness in his nature.

And if he could get through this passage without arousing further the suspicions of Bob Spale, so much the better! Nick realized that so far neither Bob nor his henchman suspected that the man whom they had found in the grasp of the man-monkey was on Bob's trail. In the light of the lamp in the kitchen, which had evidently been lit immediately by Johnny, Nick's appearance had borne out the idea that he was a tramp looking for a place to sleep.

That this old house had been a tramp's refuge before Bob Spale had taken up his residence in it two months before, with his strange companion, made the belief reasonable. And Johnny seemed to have enough influence with Bob to keep him from doing a supposed innocent man any serious damage.

Now, Johnny himself had come to "fix" the prisoner on their own departure from the house. The detective made up his mind to suffer whatever handling Johnny should think necessary, and continued to appear still only half conscious.

He muttered when Johnny shook him, and when the wharf rat scratched a lucifer and held the blaze near his face, Nick only blinked and closed his eyes again.

"Gee! dead to de world!" muttered Johnny. "Say! it's a wonder if Bob didn't most croak him. Ugh!"

He shuddered and dropped the cord he had brought into the room, with which he had plainly intended tying Nick's hands. But now he merely threw the cord around the prisoner's body, tucking the ends under him so as to make it appear at a casual glance that the victim's hands were fastened to his sides.

"I reckon that'll do for you," he muttered, and immediately rose and went back to the door.

"Come on, now! let's light out," whispered Whittling Johnny shrilly, as he stepped into the other room. "Look out for that beast, Bob."

"Come here, *you!*" commanded Spale to the big monkey. "Now, put on his cap. What d'ye think, Johnny? Don't he look in that long coat and the goggles like a reg'lar speeder? I told you—here! let that alone, you devil!"

A blow followed and a low whine from the ourang. It was evidently fear only that kept the man-monkey in subjection to Bob Spale; yet his master must have some strange sort of attachment for him, too. If not,

why should the fugitive criminal risk his safety by returning to his old abode to take away the beast—an incumbrance that was sure to be a menace to his safety?

Even the possible value of the animal as a trained adjunct to a circus, or museum, would hardly excuse Bob Spale's recklessness in burdening himself with the ourang. It was a subject for wonder in Nick Carter's mind.

Meanwhile, the latter lay prone on the floor of the inner room and listened to the final preparation of the men for departure. It was evident that they had disguised the man-monkey as a motorist, and would get away with the game in that way. But where were they bound for? And how great a start dared the detective give them before following on their trail?

Bob had let drop the fact that they had a machine—undoubtedly a motor car—waiting within a mile of the hollow where the house lay. They evidently had not brought it nearer for caution's sake, and expected to have difficulty in making the ourang walk erect so far.

"If I can get their direction on leaving the house, I reckon I can afford them some minutes' start," considered the detective. "That horrible brute will keep them back."

He remained stark upon the floor until he was sure the trio were well out of the house and the door locked behind them. The heavy boots of the two men made some noise as they walked away, and he heard the man-monkey whining, and Bob Spale swearing in a low voice at the brute.

Sure that he was now alone in the house, he leaped to his feet and searched for the stairway leading to the second floor. He did not wish to unbar a lower window, for that might attract attention; and, besides, he could see much better from the upper story.

After lighting two or three matches, he found the stairway, went carefully up, and groped his way to a window looking toward the highway. At first he could see nothing of the men and their strange companion, and, as all sounds seemed to have ceased without, he wondered if they had really gone, or if they were still lurking near the house.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN BEHIND.

In this uncertainty he could not wait for long; time was passing and he was wasting it. Finally, in sheer desperation, he tugged at the window until it opened a little way. Putting his ear to the aperture, he strained his hearing to catch some sound from the enemy.

And it was not long before Nick Carter found that his apprehension had been unfounded. Bob Spale, and Whittling Johnny, and their terrible companion had been moving steadily away from the house in the hollow and had then reached the highroad.

The detective heard the men's heavy shoes kicking against the fence rails as they went through, and then Bob swore at the ourang.

"Git up there, hang you!" he cried. "Stand up like a man." And there was the sound of a blow, and the creature whined again.

Nick peered out of the open window, watching the sky line above the rise of the hillside. With that lighter, cloud-covered sky for a background, he could see the several cottages standing out silhouette-like, and the skeleton stretches of the fence rails. Soon the misty figures of the trio who had just left the house in the hollow came into his line of vision. They were moving along the road in the direction opposite to that from which Nick had come when he approached the place.

"All right!" muttered the detective. "It's me for the trail at once. I must catch up with them before they reach that automobile."

He groped his way through to the back of the house, found the window over the back door, and forced that open with some difficulty. Once it was open, however, it was an easy matter to get out upon the hood over the door and, hanging to that by his hands, drop lightly to the ground.

His recent struggle with the man-monkey had not materially injured Nick Carter; but he felt somewhat lame and sore. This did not deter him, however, from putting on all speed to overtake the trio he was after.

The two men and the man-ape were both out of sight and sound by now; but the detective had made sure of their direction, and he hurried along the roadside, walking carefully on the sod only, and so deadening his footfalls.

He suddenly came in sight of the three at a corner. There were no houses about, and the roads were really little more than country lanes. Nick was wise enough to leap the fence beside him and creep into some bushes.

He heard the men's voices in argument almost immediately.

"I tell you *he* says we're being followed!" Nick heard Bob Spale say, with confidence. "Don't you suppose I'd trust *his* hearin'—or *his* nose—before I would yours or my own? He tells me as plain as day that there's somebody behind us."

"Well, there may be somebody on the road—yes. Why not?" demanded Whittling Johnny.

"Did you tie that fellow up tight?" growled Bob. "I'd ought to 'tended to that myself."

"Oh, you come along!" ejaculated his companion. "He was dead to de world, I tell you! It ain't him!"

"I—don't—know," grumbled Spale, as they moved away slowly.

Nick immediately saw that the man-monkey's nostrils were much keener than the men's intelligence. There was a light wind, and it had been blowing from

him toward the trio. The beast had discovered his approach by his scent—and perhaps scented an enemy, too.

This fact added to the difficulties of the detective's pursuit; but as his quarry took a turn just here and went down a by-road, he was able to go across lots himself and keep out of the range of the animal that could snuff his approach on the night wind.

He kept out of direct line until the pursued reached another highway—a road that was plainly a public street, and had lamps and some houses in sight. Here one of the men whistled shrilly, and in a peculiar way.

After a moment Nick heard the explosions of an automobile engine, and soon the whir of it approached from some dark spot along the highway. It looked now as though the party was about to be whisked out of his clutches.

Had only a mounted cop come along, Nick would have ventured, with that assistance, to attack the party, and at least secure the jail fugitive, Bob Spale. But not a soul save the chauffeur of the car appeared, and he might be in the confidence of Spale and Whittling Johnny.

To have come through his struggle with that beast of a monkey, to have escaped from the house and be so close on the enemy's trail, and then to fail, jarred Nick Carter a good deal. He was tempted to attack the party single-handed; and, indeed, if it had only been the men alone he would have done so!

As terrible as Bob Spale was himself, Nick would have willingly tried issues with him; but he did not desire another battle with the man-monkey. That beast, he knew, would be set upon him should he reveal himself. Indeed, the creature would need no urging, but would doubtless recognize his hated enemy and lead the attack.

Brave as he might be, Nick Carter was not reckless enough to encounter that monster a second time—at least, not from choice!

Nor was he in the habit of letting his quarry escape him. He crept to the edge of the main highway, keeping off-wind from the party, that the ourang might not scent his presence; and he was within a few yards of the spot when the automobile wheeled in at the side of the road and stopped. It was headed cityward, and there was only the man under the wheel in the machine.

"Hello, 'bo!" sang out Whittling Johnny, and Nick guessed, by the jollying tone the fellow used, that the chauffeur was not entirely "wise" to the situation. "We've got our friend, yer see. You can whiz us back in a jiffy, heh?"

"All right," returned the chauffeur. "Get right in, please. It is after midnight now, you know."

"Well, we're paying you by the hour, ain't we?" growled Spale. "Come on, *you!*" This to the ourang, who had to be forced into the tonneau, Nick saw. The animal complained some, and the chauffeur asked:

"What's the matter with him—sick?"

"Oh, he's stewed," interposed Johnny hastily. "Don't mind a little thing like that, cull."

He said this, with a chuckle, while he was getting in beside the driver of the machine.

"All right, now!" sang out Bob Spale, settling himself beside the disguised ourang. "Cut loose, there, mister."

The automobile began to shake under the jar of the engine. Nick Carter darted out of the shadow and, crouching low, ran to the rear of the machine. He had but a single idea in mind in so doing; he desired to make sure of the numbers on the sign swinging beneath the rear axle.

He expected to hear a disturbance in the tonneau immediately. The wind had freshened and blew now directly from him to the car as it started slowly along the dusty highway. The keen scent of the man-ape would surely reveal his presence to the whole party. But this did not trouble Nick so much, if he once secured the license number of the machine. That discovery would be something to work on, at least.

He reached the car, the speed of which was slowly increasing. He even put his hand on the baggage rack under the high back of the tonneau while he stooped to make out the figures. Although his own feet made no sound in the dust of the roadway, he expected to hear the outbreak of the ourang every instant.

But for once Nick Carter had not taken every fact into consideration before coming to a decision. And his mistake flashed across his mind abruptly.

There was no outcry from the vehicle, which bounced over the uneven track at a pace that already made Nick trot. And the reason for the big ape's loss of scent was impressed most forcibly upon the detective's mind, and that by his own present position at the tail of the chugging automobile!

The stench of the gasoline killed every other odor.

Nick realized this fact with a sudden acceleration of heartbeats. He had scarcely hoped to follow this car without much trouble. And he might have great difficulty in landing his game in the end. But the fact that the gasoline smell had become his friend changed all this.

The car moved more rapidly and he could scarcely keep up. He laid hold of the straps and leaped lightly to his knees on the luggage carrier. It was a narrow ledge, but he could sit sideways, after some little manœuvring, and there was no serious danger of his being thrown off by ordinary traveling.

On the car hurried, the party he was trailing having no idea at all that there was "a man behind." For the present—while they were running through the country districts, at least—he was in little danger of being discovered.

When the car shot under a street light a pedestrian would scarcely have glimpsed the detective, clinging so closely under the folded back hood of the automobile. When the machine skidded around a corner the man behind clung tighter to the hand holds, and,

crouching on the narrow shelf, revealed nothing of his shadow outside the outline of the car itself.

They shot on along the road to Long Island City and the ferry. It was evident that Bob and Johnny expected no pursuit, for they followed the straightest road. Of course, they knew well enough the hue and cry was out for Bob among the uniformed police of Greater New York, but in the disguise of his automobile togs, who would recognize the strange, long-armed creature who had escaped from the Tombs twenty-four hours before?

Nick's mind shuttlecocked between the idea of having the men nabbed on the ferryboat and tracing them to their quarters, where the lame girl was likely to be waiting for them. Nick seldom worked with the regular police. He wished to capture Bob and his assistants with only the aid of his own helpers. And as Belle, Whittling Johnny's sister, had undoubtedly aided in Bob Spale's escape from the jail, she should likewise be apprehended. To Nick's mind it would be an unworkmanlike job to call on the police at this juncture.

So, when they rolled under the roof of the darkened ferryhouse, Nick slipped off his perch and darted out of sight. He made sure that the car would go upon the boat as soon as it came in, and that the men and their strange charge did not propose to leave the vehicle.

Then he ran back into the Long Island station, got into a telephone booth, and arranged to have a taxicab ready for him on the other side of the river. Had he known where the men he was following were bound he would then and there have called up his house and set Chick and, possibly, Patsy on the trail, too.

As it was, he strolled back to the ferry, went aboard as an ordinary passenger when the gates were opened, and stood near the car all the way across the river. But he was mighty careful to stand on the leeward side of the automobile!

Bob and his strange companion crouched together in the back seat of the car, and for the life of him Nick could not have told them apart in their masks and caps. But Whittling Johnny was palpably nervous when the boat came in to the New York slip and the chains were dropped in front of the car.

"Now for it!" Nick heard the water rat gasp, turning to give his friend a scared grin.

"Keep up your courage, you fool!" growled Bob, and then the car rolled out upon the wharf. There were a couple of officers in uniform at the gate, but they paid no attention to the automobile. Most of the other vehicles on the ferryboat had been Long Island truck gardeners' wagons bound for market.

Nick had ordered his cab to wait for him in front of the ferry house, and he found it and skipped inside before the auto he was interested in was out upon the street.

"Keep that car in sight," he said to the chauffeur, "and it will mean just twice what your clock registers—for you."

"All right, me covey!" ejaculated the chauffeur, and they were off on the trail of the already fast-speeding car.

At that hour of the night the police are not so strict about the rules of the road as in the daytime. Autos and cabs dart about the more unfrequented streets at a speed which would call the law down upon the drivers' heads at other hours.

The car Nick was following was sent up Third Avenue at the speed of an express train, and it would have been indeed reckless for the taxicab to keep near it. But, although several blocks behind, when the car made the turn at One Hundred and Tenth Street, Nick was still in sight.

"Through here to Lexington, and then north!" he shouted to his driver.

If those in the car feared they were being followed by the cab, this move might relieve them of that apprehension. But when the cab skidded around the corner into Lexington Avenue the detective was amazed to see the very car he was following had turned down the avenue and was approaching them.

But the unexpected move was almost instantly explained, and Nick had the presence of mind to command his driver to keep straight on. The automobile containing Bob Spale and his companions was slowing down, and as soon as it stopped Whittling Johnny jumped out.

As Nick's cab shot by he saw that Bob himself was preparing to descend from the vehicle with the ourang, too. A word or two the detective had heard drop between the men in the house in the hollow led him to believe that they were bound for some apartment house where either Bob or Johnny had taken the situation of janitor, and now it appeared that the house in question must be somewhere in this vicinity.

"Around the next corner," said Nick to his chauffeur. And when the cab had run half a block, he stopped it, leaped out, told the man to wait while he ran back and peered around into the avenue.

Bob Spale was paying the chauffeur of the car, while Johnny was standing by, evidently half holding the ourang upright. The beast wished to drop upon all fours, and his actions really did make him appear like a drunken man.

As the enemy were afoot, the detective was without apprehension that he would lose them. He slouched at the corner until the automobile Bob and his associates had used drove away, and then he set out to dog the footsteps of the trio wherever they would lead.

CHAPTER XI.

ADELINA AND THE LAME GIRL.

It was in Nick Carter's study, some time after breakfast, that the great detective and his family were gathered. Nick showed little of the effects of his

night's work, for a bath and rubdown by Joseph had taken the strained feeling out of his muscles, and an hour's nap had refreshed his brain.

He had heard the meagre reports of Patsy and Chick, and had related his own adventures up to the point where he had run his quarry to earth in Harlem.

"The apartment house to which I traced them is one of those huge buildings, five stories in height, and without an elevator—the cheaper kind of flats, yet occupied by very respectable people. There are five flats on the floor, so plenty of people are going in and out of the house at all times.

"They dove into the basement, as I expected them to, and I believe that the lame sister of Whittling Johnny let them in when they rang. However, I put the man on post there wise to the fact that I was interested in the people who lived in the basement of the big 'double-decker,' and he told me that the house had recently lost its old janitor and the agent had installed a new one that very day.

"I have already had this agent on the phone," continued Nick, "and, representing myself as a tradesman, discovered all the agent knew about his new janitor. He had had so much trouble with recent candidates for that office that he had taken on this party out of sheer desperation.

"The janitor is really Whittling Johnny. The agent admits he was not favorably impressed by the man, but his sister impressed him as being honest and industrious, and she brought several letters from missionaries and settlement-house workers down on the East Side. So he has given them a trial.

"Besides, he says there is a relative with them who claims to be a handy man with tools, and the two men together cleaned the house yesterday from top to bottom, much to the agent's satisfaction.

"It looks as though the party had settled down there, believing that they would attract little attention. Bob Spale is wise in one thing, at least. He would be less likely to be apprehended by doing exactly as he has than as though he had tried to get out of town."

"But the gorilla!" exclaimed Chick. "That's a crazy thing—to bring such a creature into a hive of humanity like that big apartment house."

"That's what it is," agreed Patsy.

"Only think what might happen if the creature should escape and attack some of the poor little children!" Adeline said. "Do arrest them all, Nick, and have the ape properly secured."

"All in good time, my dear," replied their chief, smiling. "But remember that I have not been engaged merely to rearrest this jailbird and assassin, Robert Spale. I have been set a task by Mr. Alfred Meyer to learn the mystery of his life—of the twenty-five years he spent away from New York, and even of his manner of living during these last five years when, we presume, he has lived in or near this city.

"As the police have already found, Bob Spale is as close-mouthed as an oyster. I happen to know that M'Caffery tried the third degree on him and he merely grinned at them. You could not rattle the fellow, or make him lose his nerve. He's been through too much in his wild life, I reckon, to be disturbed by any mental terrors the detective bureau could spring on him.

"There is already evidence enough in the hands of the police, and in the district attorney's office, to convict Bob Spale of his nephew's murder. But through his attorney the man is likely to make an attempt to get hold of a part of the fortune which was in the murdered man's hands. This would be a desperate play, indeed; but he is in a desperate position, and he has working for him a lawyer who is, I fancy, quite without conscience—that fellow Emanuel Finowitz.

"What and who Bob Spale really is may mean much to Mr. Alfred Meyer, who now has the welfare of the estate in his charge. We are working for Meyer and the Spale estate, remember, not for the constituted authorities.

"Of course, I do not propose to let Bob Spale escape. But this is not the moment for his arrest. And, really, I'd like to know why he shows such fondness for that beast of an ape, too! I declare, my own curiosity urges me to get to the bottom of the mystery. And we will proceed to lay our plans to this end," added Nick, smiling.

"Bob Spale will not tell his story; but I guarantee Whittling Johnny knows it, and probably his sister does, too. Whittling Johnny is a coward, I fancy; yet his gratitude to Bob for some real or fancied kindness may hold him faithful to the scoundrel under any and all circumstances. It might be difficult to get Johnny to turn State's evidence.

"But there remains the sister, the lame girl. What is your opinion, Adelina, from hearing all that Patsy has been able to learn regarding Belle and her brother, of this cripple? A woman's intuition about another woman is always valuable."

"Why, am I able to judge?" cried Adelina, blushing. "I have not even seen the girl——"

"But you have heard about her. You know all that Patsy has been able to gather. You know that Johnny, in spite of his general uselessness and viciousness, is devoted to her. Is she devoted to him in return? Would she, do you think," queried Nick earnestly, "sacrifice this Bob Spale if by so doing she could save her brother from harm?"

Adelina sprang to her feet with a little cry. "I see what you mean, Nick!" she cried.

"I see you do." said the detective, nodding. "Can I trust you to work a little third degree of your own on this crippled girl, for the sake of her brother and herself? For really, after all, we do not much care to punish the couple for what they have done out of gratitude. They are merely 'in wrong,' as Patsy would say. We may be able to save them from getting into serious trouble with the police; but she must be urged to give up all the information she has about Bob as payment for our saving her brother.

"Meanwhile," added Nick Carter, smiling upon the two young men, "I will arrange that one or the other of you is on the spot all the time. The place must be watched. Bob Spale will not be allowed to escape. And, whatever happens, that monster he carries about with him must not be allowed to attack any other human being as it did me! That is an experience I am not likely to forget in a hurry," concluded Nick, with a slight shudder.

So it happened that the particular flat house in Harlem, which Nick had seen entered in the small hours of the morning by the strange trio he had followed so successfully from the Long Island suburb, became an object of interest to Chick and Patsy—and even Danny took a hand at relieving them during the day. In several disguises these young men entered the basement, proposing to send up parcels to people who did not live in the house, or calling for orders, and hearing other excuses which seemed reasonable enough to the new janitor and his sister.

In this way they learned that, although Bob Spale and his man-ape were not visible in the janitor's rooms, he was undoubtedly below, in the cellar, where he was doing some carpentering work. It was Patsy's shrewd guess that Bob was making some kind of a secure place in which to confine the ourang—perhaps making a coal box into a strong cage for the beast.

Whittling Johnny's crippled sister was a sweet-faced girl, or woman—she was quite thirty-five—and had the patient, worn expression of countenance which usually accompanies the victim of a spinal complaint. In spite of the fact that she could not move far without the aid of her crutches, she managed to keep the rooms allotted to the janitor very tidy, and she cooked the meals for herself and the two men with her.

Patsy discovered this when, as a messenger boy, he butted into the basement on the hunt for "Heiney Schlagelberger"—a fictitious character for whom he claimed to have a very important telegraph dispatch. He saw the table set neatly in the little kitchen, and places for three at the board.

"Bob Spale is there, all right, so we needn't worry," Patsy afterward confided to Adelina, his wife, whom he found sitting in Nick's limousine automobile not more than a block from the house which was the object of so much attention on the part of Nick and his assistants. "And there's another thing I discovered. She's going out after luncheon—or dinner, as they call it. I heard her tell Johnny she was going to market. Naturally, they being poor people, and used to getting as much as possible for as little as need be, she will steer for the push-cart market on First or Second Avenues. That will be your chance, Adelina."

His wife merely nodded. She was already well instructed by Nick as to her work, and the part she was to play was one that she could do ample justice to. Adelina was a natural actor, and particularly could she "make up" in old women's parts—a thing that a young and pretty woman does not often care to do on the stage!

She had made up so well in this kind of character—notably as *Inez Redenda*, the South American patriot—that she had, on one occasion, even startled Patsy himself! Had he not known the car, and known she was to be waiting in it, he never would have recognized his wife this time as she sat at ease in the limousine, dressed in silver-gray silk, with just the sweetest touch of pink in her modest bonnet, old-fashioned "half mitts" on her hands—on the backs of which the wrinkles of age were well simulated, as well as upon her face—the very nicest picture of a lovely old lady that one could wish to see.

Two hours later, when Belle, the cripple, stepped down the curb of Third Avenue she did not see the large automobile that glided up behind her. There was no more skillful driver than Danny in all New York, but it really looked as though he came near to running the unfortunate cripple down!

His mistress, opening the slide in the front of the limousine, spoke sharply to him, and then called to the half-frightened woman who had stepped hastily back upon the curbstone.

"My dear! I hope you will forgive me," she said earnestly. "And the young man is usually very careful. And you are lame!" she added, as though just noticing that fact. "I beg of you, let me take you home."

"Oh, no, madam! You are too kind," gasped the surprised lame woman.

"It will give me pleasure to do so," rejoined the disguised Adelina.

"I could not think of it," urged Belle.

"But you must." And Adelina's smile would have melted a more adamantine determination than Belle's.

"I—I am not going home, madam," said the poor woman.

"Then let me take you to your destination?"

"I—I was going shopping," explained the confused Belle.

"And that is what I have been doing already," declared the old lady in the limousine, with a gay little laugh. "Do get in. The policeman on the corner will think I am kidnapping you."

That is exactly what she was doing, for it was really against her will that Belle hobbled to the car and stepped in.

"Oh, madam!" she cried. "You cannot take me in this automobile to where I market."

"And why not?" the old lady demanded.

"It—it would look so absurd."

"And why absurd?" demanded this apparently very independent old party, tossing her gray curls. "Do you mean that you trade at the poorer stores?"

"I was going to the street market on the other avenue," confessed Belle.

"Very well. You shall go there if you wish," returned her hostess, and she spoke to the chauffeur,

and the car glided through the side street toward the poorer quarter mentioned by the cripple.

Nothing could stay the determination of this old lady when once she seemed to make up her mind. The automobile was halted by the line of push carts, which were presided over by Italian, Greek, and Hebrew peddlers, and she directed them to bring to the open door of the limousine the articles which Belle expressed a wish to buy.

And the old lady showed herself to be a canny bargainer, too. Although she did not add to Belle's confusion by offering to pay for any of the fruit and vegetables the cripple fancied, she still accused one man of trying to get two prices because the buyer came in a car and appeared to be wealthy.

"Looks are deceiving, young man!" declared this peculiar old party. "She is buying for herself, not for me. I would not have anything to do with that man, my dear; he is not honest."

She seemed to extract a great deal of enjoyment out of the marketing, and when it was finished she would not take Belle directly home, having made her confess that there was really no need for her returning at once.

"Now that you have made your purchases, you shall go with me for a little jaunt," said the old lady. And she spoke to the chauffeur, who quickly whirled them away to Central Park, into which the car glided, and down through its splendid length and out upon Fifth Avenue.

It was accomplished so quickly, and the ride was so beautiful, that the cripple made no objection after they were once started. She just sat, breathing eagerly, a little color stealing into her cheeks, and watching all that passed in panorama before her. A child of the slums, she had scarcely ever seen the better part of Manhattan. For years now she had been confined to the water front near the East River. This was indeed an occasion!

Danny had his instructions, and suddenly, at the right corner, he brought the car into a side street, and then around into Madison Avenue. In a moment they had pulled up in front of Nick Carter's house.

"Here I am at home, my dear," said the old lady kindly. "Will you not come in and take a cup of tea from me? Then the man will drive you to your own home. It will please me very much if you will come," she added, seeing the refusal hovering on the girl's lips.

And thus urged, crippled Belle agreed, and, being helped out of the machine by Danny, hobbled after her hostess, up the steps and into the very pretty spider's web indeed of Adelina's own boudoir!

CHAPTER XII.

THE STORY BELLE TOLD.

That the cripple seemed confused and ill at ease in a lady's private apartment was not at all surprising, for poor Belle, in all her thirty-five years of existence, had never even imagined such a charming place as Adelina's boudoir. Nick had made it his pleasure to furnish the rooms occupied by Patsy Garvan and his wife himself, and he had spared neither money nor good taste in making them worthy of the beautiful young South American whom Patsy had espoused.

Belle scarcely dared sit upon the chair to which the disguised Adelina beckoned her; and when the solemn-faced Joseph appeared with the tea tray, the visitor could have been no more startled had the serving man been a policeman!

The supposed old lady laughed very heartily when Joseph had gone, and said to her visitor:

"My dear, I would almost believe that you had a guilty conscience, you are so easily startled."

"I—I—perhaps I have, madam," murmured the woman feelingly.

"No! You cannot mean it?"

"Perhaps most everybody has some guilt on their conscience," the woman said lamely.

"No, there are many people who sleep at night without a thing to worry them," declared Adelina earnestly.

"Do you believe so?"

"I know so," returned her hostess, smiling.

"But do we not all—that is, are there not some excusable circumstances that make us, at times, do what we know to be wrong? We would not do differently if we had it to decide again; yet the fact that we have done wrong worries us."

"You state a serious problem, my dear," said the disguised Adelina.

"It is serious to me," admitted the other.

"What is your name, my dear?" queried her host calmly.

"You may call me Belle, madam, if you will."

"I shall be glad to," declared the supposed old lady, with one of her rare smiles. "And, Belle, tell me what you mean? Have you been forced by circumstances to do something which troubles you?"

"Oh! perhaps I should not have said that," murmured the visitor.

"And perhaps, too, it is just the thing you should have said. . . . Drink your tea, child. Is it not to your taste?"

"It is beautiful, madam. I never drank such tea before."

"Orange pekoe is indeed a fragrant beverage," admitted her hostess, smiling quietly. "But let us return to our mutton. I confess I am curious—old people are allowed that privilege, I believe."

"But—but I could not tell you all of it," confessed Belle.

"Tell me what you feel that you may," urged Adelina.

"Well, madam, I have a brother—a brother of whom I am very fond and who has been very, very kind to me. He is not a *good* man; I have always known that. We were not brought up among good

people. Why, madam! if you knew what and who I really am you would never have taken me into your automobile, or invited me into your house here."

Her listener neither admitted this or denied it; she merely said:

"Well?"

"I—I—I really feel as though I *must* go on and tell you what I can; you have been so kind," stammered Belle.

"And perhaps I may help you," interposed Adelina.

"Oh, you cannot!"

"With advice, perhaps."

"Thank you, madam. But let me tell you what I may while I have the courage. It is about my brother, first. He is devoted to me—and to drink. He lives only—or has lived in the past—to care for me and then to sink himself into the foulest kind of degradation, steeped in liquor.

"But a man whom he admired as a boy—a man who has been a fierce and wicked man all his life, and has not lived like a human being part of the time—nearly thirty years—came into our lives again recently. I could only just remember this man as he was when he went away from New York so long ago. I was a little thing then, hobbling about, for I have always been a cripple, madam. This man—then a boy—used to be kind to me.

"He saved my brother's life from drowning. My brother was his slave as a boy. Now he would do anything for this man. And the man, having some money, has really been very kind to both of us since his return. But he has, lately got my brother into serious trouble, and, through Johnny, has got me into trouble, too."

"What kind of trouble, Belle?" asked Adelina kindly.

"I helped them break the law. I have done something for which I might be shut up. So has Johnny."

"But you would not do it again?"

"I know that my brother will continue to do anything to shield this man. He has risked much already. The man, madam, is a fugitive from justice, and is accused of a terrible crime. I do not believe he can be guilty; but that does not save us if the police should find us out!" And suddenly she buried her wan face in her hands and began to sob.

"Surely, you are in no danger, Belle?" queried Adelina, with real sympathy.

"I am. And Johnny is in worse danger. The man is still with us, and he is so fierce and so terrible that I am afraid of what our association with him may lead Johnny into."

"You do not believe that this man who wields such a power over your brother is really guilty of the crime for which he has been arrested?"

"Oh, I cannot believe it!" gasped Belle.

"You mean that you don't wish to believe such a thing possible?"

"Ye—es."

"And the crime is—what?"

"An awful one! I could not tell you, madam."

"Is it murder?"

The woman only rocked herself to and fro and groaned. Adeline placed a kindly hand upon her shoulder.

"My dear," she said, "I am going to guess about this affair. I do not want you to be startled, and I will explain as I go along, so that you will see how easy it might be for me to hit near the truth of your trouble.

"Your name is Belle, and you are a cripple. You have a brother named Johnny. The paper has told us to-day of the escape of a desperate criminal from the Tombs prison, who was aided by a girl named Belle, who is a cripple, and whose brother is a waterside character known as 'Whittling Johnny.'

"No! do not start from me or seek to run away! It was a very fortunate thing, perhaps, that I came across you to-day, and that we are having this conversation here. I said I might advise you. I believe I can *help* you," declared Adelina firmly.

"Now, drink this other cup of tea and let me talk to you a little, Belle," she added. "I know you would not wish to do your brother any harm, nor would you desire to harm this man whom you have both unwisely helped. But if that man was really the criminal they say he is, and he was leading your brother deeper and deeper into trouble, you would certainly sacrifice him to save your brother, would you not?"

"Yes! yes!" cried the woman. "I fear he has led Johnny into trouble."

"He certainly has, my dear. And the trouble is growing blacker every hour. I can assure you that this Robert Spale is quite as bad as the police say he is."

"Oh, madam!"

"I know whereof I speak," declared Adelina, with confidence. "He did most terribly bring about his nephew's death. He is indeed an assassin. Now, should you defend, or try and save from justice, such a man? And, remember, he is selfishly entangling your brother in the same net with himself."

"Oh, madam! how do you know these things? Are you seeking to make me be a traitor to my own brother?"

"I would have you save your brother by making a clean breast of the whole affair to me," declared Adelina sternly. "This is a happy chance for you, Belle.

It is more than chance; you may call it providential. I am in a position to save you and your brother if you will confide in me."

"How can you do that, madam? What power have you?" cried the poor cripple, wringing her hands.

"I am acquainted with the detective, Nick Carter. He is the man who arrested Bob Spale before. He has him under surveillance now. He and his men already have the house where Bob Spale is hiding surrounded. And unless somebody intervenes, your brother, and you, if you are there at the time, will be arrested with Spale."

"Oh, madam! Let me go——"

"To warn them?" cried Adelina. "Think again! Why should I do so? I tell you, Spale is a criminal. It is wrong to help him. But I realize that all you two have done has been undertaken out of gratitude, and a mistaken idea of what the man really is.

"I have some influence with Nick Carter," pursued Adelina. "If I ask it of him, he will let your brother escape. But you must do something for Mr. Carter in return."

"Oh, madam! do not ask me to play the traitor to Spale."

"I ask you to do nothing of the kind. I tell you that already he is as good as arrested. Mr. Carter was himself on the back of the automobile in which your brother, and Spale, and that horrible beast Spale lugs about with him——"

At that Belle sprang up with a startled scream, staring horrified at her hostess.

"Do—do you know about that?" she cried.

"Do you not see I do?" returned Adelina calmly. "Mr. Carter was with them, and they did not know it. He followed them to the house which your brother is janitor in. Do you not see that you have nothing to play the traitor about?"

"Oh, it is over, then!" groaned Belle. "Johnny is sure to be arrested."

"He will be unless Nick Carter intervenes."

"And can you get him to save my brother?" cried Belle.

"Yes."

"Oh! will you do so, madam?"

"I will," said Adelina simply.

The other looked at her wonderingly and then shrank back. "But there is a condition?" she whispered.

"There is. But to *me* it seems a simple one."

"Tell me!" urged the cripple.

"Mr. Carter is anxious to obtain a full and particular account of Robert Spale's life during the last thirty years. Do you know where he has been, what he has done, and all about his existence since he originally left New York?"

Belle, the cripple, shrank back again, and her face paled. She evidently could not answer the question at first. Then her trembling lips framed these words:

"I know more about it than I wish I knew."

"Will you tell it to me, that I may repeat it to Nick Carter, and as the price take your own and your brother's freedom?" asked Adelina quietly.

"Oh, madam! you do not know what you ask of me."

"Have you been forbidden by Spale to tell what you know?"

"He does not know that I know it," she said, with a sob.

"How was that?"

"He told my brother when they were both very much intoxicated. That awful Bob drinks nothing but rum and pepper. He must be impervious to fire inside. But the stuff does not make him drunk, or sick, as liquor does other men. It only makes him talkative and boastful.

"He was drinking with my brother in our house, where we lived before. They did not know I was in my room. And after I had heard some of his story I dared not let him know I was there. I think Johnny was so drunk himself that he did not sense half that Bob said to him. It was a dreadful story, madam! Do you really mean you wish to hear it?"

"Not only that, but I want you to talk it into this phonograph," said Adelina firmly, opening a cabinet machine that stood on a stand at her elbow. "Tell the story to this; then Mr. Carter can hear it in your own voice and just as you tell it."

"Oh, madam! is that a phonograph? I never talked into one before."

"Speak just as though you and I were alone together, Belle. And tell it all fully. I promise you that it shall pay your brother's way to freedom when Nick Carter descends upon that house and arrests Bob Spale."

CHAPTER XIII.

"GULLIVER'S TRAVELS."

To repeat the story as it dribbled from the boastful lips of Bob Spale himself, when he was far gone in drink, interspersed with his strange oaths and

coarse expressions, would shock the reader of this history as it had shocked the poor cripple, Belle. She could not repeat it in the man's own words, so the tale lost some value in the telling.

Therefore, a brief transcription of what Nick Carter later heard repeated by the phonograph will be sufficient, and more than sufficient, to explain to the reader the mystery of Bob Spale's life.

What he had done and where he had immediately gone after running away to sea when still a young man he did not say. But he did not return to New York in the ship on which he had first gone out, and knocked about the Eastern Seas for some years before he fell in with a trader who, with a little steamer, ventured into all sorts of unknown regions in search of valuable cargoes which might be obtained from the natives for gewgaws and notions.

They went to Borneo, and Bob Spale became second in command of the trading steamer. They went up a river in that big island, they were caught by a dry season, and most of the crew died of fever. Then the captain and owner of the vessel died; Bob did not say how.

He was practically owner of the craft, and a rich cargo, and at that time planned to come home, cut a dash, show his father that he could make money, too, and settle down in the old Ninth Ward as a rich man, there to end his days.

But the friendly tribes of natives with whom he had been dealing went to war against a tribe of "head hunters," and Bob went with them to show them how to fight with the white man's weapons. The head hunters, however, were not to be frightened off by antediluvian muskets, and they beat the white man and his allies, there was a terrible massacre, and Bob found himself alone in the forest, lost and wounded.

He traveled for weeks without meeting a human being, and he got into a country that was peopled by orang-outangs, huge monkeys whom the people believe can talk if they like and are really related to themselves. They even believe these big monkeys are wiser than themselves, for, as the natives say, the ourangs refuse to talk so that the white men will not seize them and set them to work!

Bob was undoubtedly light-headed from his wound, and his roving about without proper food, shelter, or clothing. He may have really gone temporarily mad from loneliness or fever for a while. But it seems that there came a time when he found himself occupying, with an ourang family, a nest of branches in a tree-top, living like the beasts, eating with them, and fighting with them at times for the possession of his share of the nest and of the food.

He was naked, and he had lived, he did not know how long, like the beasts themselves.

Then one day he fell in with a party of explorers. They thought he was that "missing link" that all scientists have been looking for since Darwin propounded his theory of evolution.

For a time Bob could not speak to them, having forgotten his native tongue, even. And then, for a time he did not wish to go back to civilization, and he refused to speak for that reason. They really thought he was a wild man.

But finally some of the native tongues came to his mind, and he began to speak; so that spoiled the scientific article the head explorer had been getting up for the European magazines. It seemed the natives must have been right about the reason for the monkeys not talking, for his captors at once put Bob to work. He was a black-haired fellow, and burned as dark as any native, and they thought him an islander.

Later he remembered some English words, and at last told the white men what and who he was. So, when they reached the coast they dressed him decently, gave him money, and he left them. He fell in with an animal catcher, and went through the island with him securing specimens for museums and menageries.

Finally he learned that circus men would pay a great price for a pair of ourangs that could be kept alive until exhibited in Europe or America. He urged his companions to try it, and finally he stripped himself and went into the woods again, and so caught easily half a dozen pair of the creatures.

His white companions believed him something uncanny, and rather shunned him after this performance; but the natives worshiped him as a devil.

They got the big apes to the coast, but nobody could understand them or feed them save Bob. So he went to Hamburg with them, arriving there with three pair.

They were exhibited for a time, but began to die off, and Bob was sought before he got to sea again—he had wasted all the money he had made—and asked to remain and care for the living ourangs. This he did, exhibiting the final pair for two years, when one of them died, and the remaining animal was sold to an itinerant showman who traveled about Germany and France with a few uncommon animals. Bob went with him, and when the ourang died, as the others

had, of tuberculosis, the man who was so much like a monkey himself faked an act in which he appeared in the ourang's skin. He and the proprietor of the show made money out of this fake for some years, and then they split up.

Meanwhile, Bob had become a good deal of an acrobat, and he continued to travel with European circuses in one character or another. Then he went back to Borneo with a German expedition in search of more ourangs. He found that he was just as successful in capturing the creatures as he had been years before. He captured, partially tamed, and imported several during the next few years.

Then he went to Africa with a party that thought they might catch gorillas in some way and exhibit them. But the gorillas proved too savage. They had to be killed to be captured; or else killed themselves in futile rage when they found they could not regain their freedom.

Finally Bob had gone to Borneo for a third time, secured several ourangs, and sailed for America. He had sold two of them before he appeared in New York, five years before our story opened, and demanded a share of the Spale estate from his nephew, Herman Spale.

Securing nothing from him but abuse, Bob joined several different circuses, under various names, had been an acrobat, a bareback rider, and an animal tamer. He had posed one season at Coney Island in a cage of mangy old lions as a trainer of the beasts.

Meanwhile, he had "hired out" the last of his ourangs to various museums and side shows, but seemed to have an affection for the brute and would not sell it. Nor would he, immediately upon breaking jail, be contented without securing the beast near him. Both Belle and her brother were afraid of the man-monkey, but Bob was determined to keep him in the cellar of the apartment house until the opportunity came for both the ourang and himself to get away from the city, and from the police, who were, of course, hunting for him.

This is the gist of the tale that Belle told to Adelina and—the phonograph. When she was done, Adelina went to the phone, called up a certain number in Harlem where Nick was waiting, and informed him that the story of Bob Spale's past was on record.

"Keep Belle with you," commanded Nick. "I will fix it so that Johnny is brought to the house, too. Then we shall see what can be done for them after Bob Spale is arrested."

He gathered together his three young assistants and called for the reserves at the nearest station. This party descended upon the apartment house in question, approaching from both front and rear, and captured Whittling Johnny without a blow.

But Bob Spale had the ears of a wild animal. He heard the bustle upstairs, and when Nick started to descend into the cellar he came near stopping a forty-four bullet.

There was something of a ruction before the capture was made. When the detectives and police finally forced their way below, and Bob's bullets were all spent, he cast himself with a snarl upon them, and fought with teeth and claws, as he had learned to fight years before in the jungle.

The big ourang broke his chain and joined in the battle, and, smelling out his old enemy, it sprang directly for Nick Carter! Carter would have gone down, and perhaps had the beast's teeth in his throat, had not Chick thrust in a pistol and shot the brute through the shoulder.

At the same moment one of the policemen fired, and his bullet found its billet in Bob Spale himself!

With another frightful roar the man fell backward and rolled upon the floor, the creature who was so much like him running whimpering to his side and leaning over him, grieving like a human being who had seen his best friend stricken down.

It was a small matter to capture both the man and the monkey after that. The monkey had had all the fight taken out of him, and from the breathing of Bob Spale, and the flow of the blood from the wound, Nick Carter knew that the man was shot through the lungs.

Whether he was ever tried and convicted of the murder of his nephew, Herman Spale, or not, it looked as though Bob Spale would pay the penalty of his evil life very shortly.

"Send for the surgeon, and get him here as soon as you can," declared Nick. "If he escapes us again it will be by the door of the morgue."

When he found time, Nick looked up his strange friend, Professor Mahoney, and, working upon a slender clue, succeeded in unraveling the mystery of his past life, so that, with memory restored, he found the home and friends so long denied him by a contrary fate.

THE END.

The next number (667) will contain "The Airshaft Spectre; or, Nick Carter's Shrewd Surmise."

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BILL SIKES AND HIS FUNNY WAYS.

Whatever other people may do, it is improbable that Mr. William McGregor, "Father of the Football League," of Great Britain, will appreciate the humor of the busy burglar. Every Christmastide for thirty years, Mr. Bill Sikes has celebrated his merry Christmas by visiting Mr. McGregor's shop at Birmingham. Last year he turned up as usual, probably with a naughty little twinkle in his eye, only, however, to find the shop stripped of everything worth taking away. The wily Scot, having had enough of him, had removed into new burglar-proof premises.

The burglar is not generally regarded as a funny man. But there are occasions when he seems as fond of cracking a joke as of cracking a crib, and this amid circumstances calculated to depress the gayest heart. Some time ago one of the craft broke into a village school at Oxford, and having selected such articles as attracted his attention, he espied a blackboard, and thereupon chalked the old familiar greeting, "Good morning. Have you used Pears' Soap?"

In another instance a certain Mme. David, concierge of the Boulevard Voltaire in Paris, having business on the top floor of the flats of which she was in charge, hung up this notice: "The concierge is upstairs." By the time she came down again the contents of her apartments had been rifled, and, glancing at the notice she had put up, found that it had been reversed, and that Bill Sikes had written on the back a memorandum of his grateful thanks. "Much obliged for the tip," were the words; "all has gone off well." And it had, too; all that was worth taking, that is.

A grimmer sort of humor, however, is sometimes evident. Even Mark Twain, that man of ten thousand jokes—himself burgled more than once—would probably laugh at the joke of a burglar who got into a house in the north of England some time ago. His valuable haul was stuffed into a Gladstone bag. Just as he was coming downstairs he was met by a substantial figure in white, with a silver candlestick in hand. It was that of the butler, who cried out: "Here! Here, I say; come back, you!"

"I beg your pardon," answered the burglar, as he once more mounted the stairs to where the butler stood. "Ah, thanks. Of course—the silver candlestick." Instantly blowing out the light, he seized the candlestick and made his way swiftly to the bottom of the stairs. Then, with his hand on the door handle, he paused a second, and shouted back: "Are you sure that I have forgotten nothing else?".

The humor of the burglar often comes out in his disappointments, as well as in his grateful realizations. He enters a house expecting to find valuables, and discovers nothing for his trouble and pains except cheap knick-knacks. The writer remembers reading a while back of a case of this kind. "By your deceit," so ran the note which the burglars left behind on a table in the house, "you have caused us considerable loss of valuable time. Your plate is cheap electro, and your candelabra made in Germany."

Though Bill Sikes probably knows as well as anybody that it is as dangerous to leave his handwriting about as his finger prints, his sense of humor, as is evident, often overcomes his sense of security. There was a man who, disgraced in his practice as a medical man, gradually drifted into burglary, and in due time became known to his intimates, and then to the police, as Doctor John. One night the doctor and one of his friends entered a house. Having made a good haul and packed up, they went down into the kitchen for supper. All that they could find for the meal was a partly consumed tin of salmon. This they scorned, and the doctor left behind half a sheet of notepaper on which was written: "Do you expect us to eat tinned salmon after what the doctors have said about it?" Unhappily for the fastidious doctor, the detectives knew his handwriting, and presently he was sent where even tinned salmon would be regarded as a veritable dainty.

Another burglar of whom the police records have cognizance was more grateful for his repast. He broke into a house while the husband was out and after the wife had retired to rest. He did his work thoroughly, and then made his way to the kitchen, where he found a note on the dining table. "Dear Fred," it ran, "you will find soup hot in oven, as well as some bread-and-butter pudding. Ethel." The burglar explored the oven, sat down to eat, presently rose satisfied, and before he left the premises acknowledged his obligations beneath the note he had found: "Dear Ethel—Everything was O. K. A Visitor."

It is, indeed, the way of the burglar to make jokes about the food he finds—the old hand, that is to say, for the young hand is too anxious to haul and be off to trouble about the food he finds in the houses he visits. Scotland Yard could tell of a case in which a burglar broke into a shop where the proprietor lived on the premises. First of all he attacked an alleged safe, and, having left it empty, he made an excursion to the pantry of the house. Here he found part of a pie in a dish, and when he had consumed some of it he seems to have regarded himself as a critical expert in pie. At any rate, he found a sheet of paper and wrote upon it: "Dear Sir—Permit me to inform you that your safe is too soft and your pie is too hard. Why is this Yours truly, Bill."

Some of the "scholars," as shop thieves are called by their friends, have given an Islington tailor a chance to exhibit a quaint notice which is attracting many people. It says:

"Messrs. Help Yourselves and Co.

"PLEASE TAKE NOTE.

"If the two light-fingered, smart young gentlemen who helped themselves to a roll of green suiting on 4th June will kindly return same, we will make them each a suit of clothes which will certainly help them to look smarter."

But instances of the humor of burglars could be multiplied almost indefinitely, so this article had better end with a note left behind by one who had operated in the house of a Scottish trader: "IOU for 5 silver spoons, ditto forks, 2 ditto candlesticks, 1 ditto inkstand, and £15 in cash."

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